

NERVE TROUBLES

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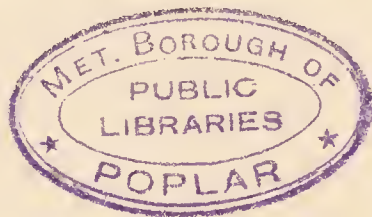
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NERVE TROUBLES
CAUSES AND CURES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

DIET FOR WOMEN
DIET FOR MEN
DIET FOR CHILDREN
DIET FOR INFANTS
WHY BE FAT ?
HOW TO KEEP WELL
GOOD HEALTH AND LONG LIFE
TWILIGHT SLEEP
WOMAN'S HEALTH AND HAPPINESS
WOMEN AND BEAUTY
THE CARE OF THE CHILD
DIET AND DISEASE
HEALTH AND DIET



NERVE TROUBLES

CAUSES AND CURES

BY

DR. CECIL WEBB-JOHNSON
M.B., Ch.B.



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INTRODUCTION

THIS age is one in which nervous diseases present one of the most poignant problems. In the last two decades medical science has made rapid strides, and has met with increasing success in combating organic and functional disease. New discoveries and fresh methods of treatment make the path to health ever easier to tread. Neurasthenia, however, continues to afflict mankind more rather than less.

There are many reasons for this. The Great War left a deep and lasting impress on the nerves of the nation. Children born during the gigantic conflict are notoriously unstable and highly-strung. Then there is the ever-increasing stress and strain of modern life. In towns, the multiplication of traffic dangers is one element which imposes a constant strain of nerve-energy. Fierce competition in trades and professions, the uncertainty of everything which gnaws at the breadwinner's consciousness, the ever-increasing difficulty of making both ends meet—especially in the case of a professional man who has to 'keep up appearances'—the crushing burdens of taxation, not forgetting local demands which increase as more and more the labouring classes get out of the habit of working: all these batter at the nervous system with lamentable results.

To this add the constant modern craze for pleasure and excitement—in all classes of the community alike—

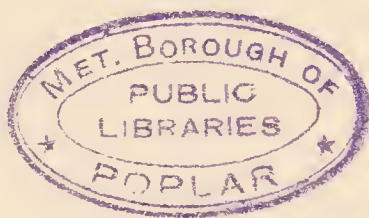
and one finds a state of things which makes us a nerve-racked nation.

This little book does not pretend to do more than offer a few useful hints to the neurasthenic, warning them of what to avoid, and advising on methods of restoring vitality to the shattered nervous system.

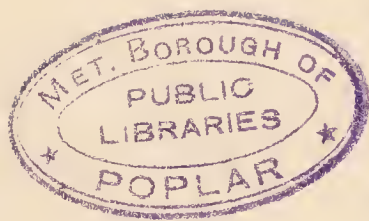
CECIL WEBB-JOHNSON

20 UPPER WIMPOLE STREET, W.1

June 1929



NERVE TROUBLES
CAUSES AND CURES



NERVE TROUBLES

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CHAPTER I

CAUSATION OF NERVOUS BREAKDOWN

THE causes of nervous breakdown and other neuropathic conditions are many and various. Nerve-weakness may be inherited; but as heredity is fully discussed in another chapter it need not be touched upon here. Worry is another cause of neurasthenia, but not work. . . . We may as well dismiss the theory that 'overwork' causes neurotic states. We read that a man has 'broken down through overwork and is taking a cure'. It has been well said that brain-work no more leads to nerve disease than hard manual labour leads to muscular disease. In these cases it is worry connected with the work that does the damage, and not the work itself. The worry to a conscientious and sensitive man of great responsibilities may cause nervousness, but hard work—never! Worry, that curse of modern life, is responsible for much of the nervous weakness that prevails to-day. Uncertainty about the future, fear of disabling illness or a prolonged spell of unemployment, the incessant struggle of the poorly paid to make ends meet, all these conduce to worry which affects the nervous system. It is poor comfort to tell the victims that worry is a vicious habit and does nobody any

good ; it will not make him stop worrying. What to do with the habitual worrier is dealt with in another chapter ; for it is a fact that worry reduces the resistance to disease, and the patient falls an easy victim to any infection that may be in the air.

Worry may actually check the flow of the natural secretions and impair the processes of digestion, thus setting up chronic dyspepsia, liver and stomach trouble.

It will thus be seen that the disease, or habit, is a very real danger to health and long life, and not at all to be taken lightly. People are apt to be impatient with the habitual worrier ; but this is cruel, for he, or she, is really a sick person.

Though worry is primarily a mental process, it is often dependent on bodily conditions, and liver trouble will cause worry, just as the reverse holds good. A person with a sluggish liver is gloomy and depressed, and filled with dark forebodings. Everything is a burden to him (or her) and existence a misery. There was far more than mere persiflage in the well-known answer to the query : ' Is life worth living ? '—' It depends on the liver.' A very great deal in this life literally does depend on the liver, and when that much-abused organ is working well again it is surprising how worry and anxiety seem to lose their power. An extreme instance of the power of the stomach over the emotions is seen in the acute depression produced by sea-sickness, when, as it has been succinctly put, ' The first part of the time you are afraid you're going to die, and the last part of the time you are afraid you aren't.'

Degenerations of the ductless glands is sometimes a cause of worry, and persons thus affected are always

melancholy and despondent. They lack will-power to meet and overcome difficulties, they are undecided, unable to make up their minds. They are slow at coming to a decision, and are apt to regret it as soon as it is made, and to wish that they had done something else. Because they are slow, absent-minded, and afraid of the future, their affairs are apt to go wrong. This has the most unfortunate effect of increasing the despondency. 'There! I knew how it would be—nothing ever goes right with me', moans the poor sufferer and immediately falls to a deeper depth of depression still. These people do not see that their failure is due to their own hesitancy and feebleness of will.

Worry may be of sexual origin. There is the doting wife who, whenever her husband is out of her sight, worries as to what is happening to him; and, if he is five minutes after his usual time of coming home in the evening, has horrid visions of his being taken to the hospital in an ambulance. This tendency, if unchecked, is liable to lead to hysteria. Sexual jealousy is another prolific source of worries. To the jealous wife the outside world is peopled with designing women whose object is to win her husband from her; and anxiety and depression thus caused is likely to have a serious effect on the health and spirits, tending eventually to nervous trouble. Long-continued strain may be bracketed with worry as a cause of nervous ills, as when a devoted wife has had to nurse a husband through a long and troublesome illness. War-strain, as we know, has caused many a nerve-storm, and many a case of prolonged neurasthenia. The monotony of an uncongenial task is apt to cause neurasthenia, as witness the case of a Brighton woman reported in a

Sunday newspaper of the date May 12, 1929. One day she suddenly walked out of the house and took the train to London, where she obtained work. She said to a reporter :

‘ I grew tired of seeing the same wallpaper, of cooking at the same stove, and of washing up the same dishes. It was not the work that worried me ; it was the monotony. I have been married nine years, and during that time I have never once been to the pictures or to a theatre or a dance.

‘ No woman can do housework and be a companion to her husband at the same time.

‘ Suddenly I decided to do what hundreds of wives must wish to do every day—I went right away from it all and had a holiday.

‘ I had no money, so I had to work as I did before I got married. But when I read that the children were crying for me and couldn’t sleep at night I came back.

‘ Now the wallpaper and the cooking seem new to me and I enjoy it just as I did when I first got married.

‘ But husbands who think that housework is not work ought to try it for a week.

‘ I think it is a good idea for wives to have a holiday like that, but all the same I don’t think I will have another. I am too glad to be back with my husband and children.’

This woman was evidently neurasthenic at the time when she left home. Change of scene, change of occupation, and the freedom from worry and monotony cured her, and she returned. Next to worry as a cause of nerve-weakness comes hurry. To avoid

hurry is essential to the busy man or woman. The great men of the centuries past were never in a hurry, and that is why the world will not forget them in a hurry. A man who is always in a state of haste and excitement is an incompetent man and his work will be badly done. In addition, he does not get through the same amount of work in a given time as a man who takes things calmly, but at the same time concentrates. Furthermore, hurry has a clearly debilitating effect upon the tissues, and may in time injure the heart. The business woman should most particularly heed this warning, for her sex has, as a rule, less power of concentration than a man, and is apt to expend its energy on a multitude of channels, diving from one thing to another in an endeavour to cope with the day's work. Hurry and hustle are the foes, not only of good, satisfactory work, but of the nerves and brain. In his famous address to the students of Yale, Sir William Osler said: 'One of the saddest of life's tragedies is the wrecking of the career of young collegians by hurry, hustle, bustle and tension—the human machine driven day and night as no sensible fellow would use his motor.'

By a curious paradox, idleness may provoke nerve-disorder as much as work and worry. Women who have nothing to do all day but amuse themselves throng the consulting-rooms of the neurologist. More serious than these cases is that of the elderly business man who has retired. The sudden cessation of activity throws a severe strain on the nervous system and the victim has to consult a nerve specialist.

Repressed sexuality is responsible for much of the nervous complaints which are found in high-minded

women who practise self-control in sex-relations. These ills are generally neurasthenia, hysteria, and mental instability. In insane asylums the spinsters outnumber the married women. 'Celibacy,' says a writer, '... fosters sexual vices and perversions, deepens self-regarding feelings, limits sympathy, checks energy, diminishes control over bad habits, restricts knowledge of men and women and of child-life, shortens the span of existence, appears to favour the development of neurasthenia, hysteria, psychothenia and insane obsessions, and sometimes causes specific organic injuries, especially among women.' These women are of the class in which high principles and rigid self-discipline forbid the gratification of the sex-passion save in holy matrimony. Such women, if of ardent temperament, are often driven to masturbation by their passions. The nervous strain of this pernicious habit, coupled with the feelings of shame and self-disgust which follow the act, is apt to bring on neurasthenic symptoms. Some women, unable to marry, and unwilling to take a lover, form dangerous associations with other women with whom they practise a vice which is named after the Greek Island on which Sappho is supposed to have lived with her retinue of women. Then the pace of the progress towards a nervous breakdown is accelerated.

Another form of neurasthenia is caused by what is called 'the inferiority complex'. This is a sense of inferiority that brings much mental disturbance and misery to the victim of it. Bullying, scolding, and cruelty in early life may react disastrously on a person's nature so as to spoil his whole existence. There are some parents who think it their duty to snub and

'keep down' their children; others make them the trembling victims of cold-blooded, heartless sneering and jeering. The child thus treated becomes convinced that in some mysterious way which he does not understand he is deemed to be inferior to those around him. Thus an 'inferiority complex' is developed, and the poor little victim grows up timid, retiring, and totally lacking in self-confidence. Often of unusual intelligence and talents, he fails to make the proper use of those talents because of his inner conviction that he is incapable and doomed to failure. All he needs is self-confidence, and the complex which is hindering and hampering him in his proper development will disappear. The nervousness shows itself in timidity, shyness, indecision, inability to make up the mind, and reluctance to begin new tasks. He does not value himself as he ought, and consequently others do not value him as he should be. On those parents who by stupid bullying and cruelty create in their children an inferiority complex there rests a grave and heavy responsibility.

To return for a moment to the subject of sex, we see many cases of nervous breakdown due to marriage. An elderly man marries a young wife, and sooner or later he develops neurasthenic symptoms. A sensitive woman is condemned to live with a husband to whom she has taken an aversion and the irksomeness of the situation preys upon her nerves. Quarrels and 'rows' between husbands and wives are also responsible; and on this subject we may point out that children living in a house where domestic naggings and bickerings are always going on are apt to grow up neurasthenic. The quarrelling couple not only injure their own

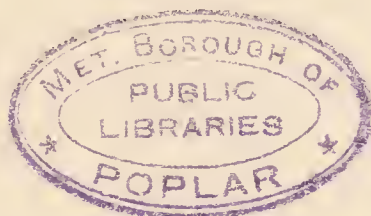
nervous systems but also those of their innocent children. What a heavy responsibility rests on those who bring other lives into the world ! Early environment can make or mar the individual, and stupid, careless, cruel or neglectful parents have much to answer for. The writer knows of the case of a brilliant young man who was from his earliest childhood snubbed, derided and sneered at by his parents. Being of an immense capacity, he was naturally dreamy, absent-minded and nervous. The uncomprehending parents actually took this for stupidity ! The consequence was that not only did they make his life a misery in childhood, but they greatly retarded his progress in the world by hampering him at the start with an inferiority complex (which is explained above).

There are also physical causes of nervous breakdown, such as debilitating illnesses. Influenza is one of them ; and since it began its periodical attacks in this country it has been responsible for a distinct increase in cases of nervous trouble. Depression, lassitude and impairment of the thinking powers are easily recognized sequels of influenza. The black cloud of mental depression which the disease leaves behind it is well known. Acute fevers such as typhoid may attack the nerves, and the longer the fever lasts the worse it is for the nerves. In the War days ' trench-fever ' was often the cause of neurasthenic symptoms.

Severe shock may, and often does, cause nervous trouble. Accidents which may not break a limb or cause actual bodily injury often cause a nervous breakdown which takes time to conquer. The main symptoms are loss of memory, tremors, insomnia, inability to concentrate the mind, and all kinds of

local pains and sensations. Even witnessing an accident will in a highly-strung person produce definite nerve-shock. Occupation may at times be a source of nervous trouble. Telephone operators and chauffeurs are particularly susceptible. Living in an uncongenial neighbourhood or an unsuitable climate may affect the nervous system.

In fact, the causation of neurasthenia has a thousand aspects as we have seen. Hereditary, predisposition, worry, grief, sexual repression, shock—all claim some victims in the great army of neurasthenics, which grows, alas, larger every year !



CHAPTER II

NERVOUS CHILDREN

IT has been discovered by investigation that children conceived and born during the period of the Great War of 1914-1918—with all its emotional stress and numberless anxieties—are quicker and more intelligent than the average pre-War child, but at the same time more highly-strung and nervous. This is not surprising, considering what their mothers went through during their pregnancies, and it shows that pre-natal conditions have a definite influence on the nervous system of the child. The greater question of heredity as regards nervous conditions will be discussed in another chapter.

Leaving aside pre-natal causes of nervousness in children, there are other predispositions. There is, for instance, the tendency to drive children into over-study by tyrannical parents, or ambitious teachers anxious to add to their list of 'successes'. Cramming for examinations has often had a disastrous effect on the nervous system. Many parents, as well as keeping children at their books when they ought to be in the open air indulging in healthy exercise, insist on their spending hours daily in striving to acquire the mastery of some musical instrument. The child often has no enthusiasm for music, or any real ability; and the secret rebellion against the necessity for practising, as well as the labour itself, brings on nervous instability. When the child has failed to pass the examination for

which he or she has so sedulously studied, deep depression ensues. The child feels that this one failure means failure all through life. It is not unknown for children of fourteen or fifteen to put an end to their lives when they have not been among the 'passes'. The awful responsibility for this lies upon their parents and teachers.

Another cause of nervous instability in children is an unhappy home life. When the parents are constantly quarrelling and having tiffs and tantrums, the child, being at a most sensitive and impressionable period of life, is apt to become 'nervy', moody, and irritable, given to sudden fits of crying for which no cause can be seen, and otherwise abnormal. If people cannot control themselves sufficiently to refrain from quarrels, 'rows', and recriminations in front of innocent children, they are not fit to have offspring. Self-control is one of the most important qualities; and if parents have it not, they cannot impart it to their children. An atmosphere of peace and happiness should surround children; there are enough woes and sorrows awaiting them in after-life.

'Nagging' by parents is another cause of nervousness in children. Some women have a natural liking for scolding and finding fault, and their children are in a perpetual purgatory. In extreme cases the mother will seize on any excuse to scold and nag, so that the child suffers from a sense of injustice and unfairness over which he or she is apt to brood. It must not be forgotten that nervous children are abnormally sensitive, and suffer terribly if subjected to injustice or false accusations. Nor let parents forget that a child's sense of justice is very keen. In childhood injustice

is resented fiercely, whereas in adult life we are apt to expect a certain amount of injustice as inevitable and 'all in the day's work'. Just as we are told that we swallow a peck of dirt during our lives, so we are taught by experience that life is not 'fair', that we are pretty certain to be misjudged and misunderstood from time to time, and we learn to accept these conditions with as much philosophy as our natures are capable of. A child has not the benefit of experience; it lives entirely in the present, and contemporary injustice seems almost too great to be borne. The sensitiveness of nervous children causes them to react abnormally to events of which the ordinary child would take but little notice. It makes them magnify trifles, and spend hours in miserable brooding, which might be occupied with healthful play. Then, of course, short-sighted parents, who will not take the trouble to understand the natures of the little ones for whom they are responsible, call them 'sulky' and 'bad-tempered'. This makes the nervous child more miserable than ever. A great responsibility rests on those careless and ignorant parents. It is a delusion to suppose that the mere fact of having a child makes a bad-minded and suspicious woman into one who is unsuspicious and clean-minded. It is also very important for parents to be honest with their children. A child who feels that his father and mother are deceiving him or not 'playing fair' with him suffers keenly, and all the more so because he feels unable to express himself as he would wish. Dealing honestly with the children which one has brought into the world implies that one can be and is honest with oneself. Dishonest parents are prone to find out that the

affection and respect of children can only be held by earning them. A parent who may be strict but is always just is respected and believed by his offspring.

Nervous children are subject to 'night-terrors' in which they awake screaming with fear of they know not what. A child known to the writer would wake calling out that the bed was 'going round and round'. It is a curious fact that night-terrors can attack children who have never been frightened or told stories about bogies. The child subject to these terrors must be dealt with very gently and tenderly. Sympathy and love are the best cures. Let the child feel that he is secure and guarded against all harm. Sharp words and scolding are of no use, besides being cruel in the extreme. The terror which the child feels may seem absurd to grown-up people, but it is only too real to him. It is idiotic to suppose that a child can be cured of night-terrors by slaps and scoldings. These methods only make matters worse, and increase the nervousness.

Nervous children are prone to suffer from enuresis. This is the term for involuntary passage of water, or bed-wetting. The utmost distress is caused to sensitive children by this weakness, which they are quite unable to control. It is their misfortune, not their fault, and they should not be scolded or spoken to sharply about it. It is a common symptom in nervous children; and if no efforts are made to combat it the weakness may persist into school-life, and if the child goes to a boarding-school its misery will be acute. The sense of infirmity, it has been pointed out, will be highly detrimental to development and may prevent important work being taken up. It is therefore

essential that the enuresis be checked. An American physician holds that the weakness is due to digestive disturbances, and advises dry meals. There are various medicines which are recommended as useful in checking the tendency to bed-wetting, and some cases have yielded to electrical treatment, but there should be no need for anything of the kind. Most cases yield to 'suggestion' as one may call it—by parents or nurses. The child should be encouraged to get up two or three times during the night, and will soon learn to do this almost automatically. Some parents may claim that they have cured the weakness by punishment; but that is a cruel method. The explanation is that the punishment has implanted in the little victim's mind the necessity for getting up in the night. It may have cured the enuresis, but at what a cost to the victim!

We have noted briefly some of the causes and symptoms of nervousness in children; now let us consider how best we may combat the condition which is causing so much undeserved misery and unfitting the little victim for taking his proper place in the world. Nervous children should have plenty of good, nourishing food, and this food must be made as appetizing and attractive as possible. Nervous children are sensitive and highly-strung, and tasteless food unattractively prepared is simply revolting to them. To force food that is unappetizing upon a nervous child is sheer cruelty. The fact that other children eat and relish it means nothing at all. Robust children with good appetites are held up as examples to the nervous child who is 'finicky' about his food; but this is stupid. The poor child feels a sense of

great inferiority, even of guilt ! ' Look at Harry, he is eating up his pudding like a good boy,' says some stupid nurse or mother, forgetting that what is one child's meat may be another child's poison. Being forced to eat dishes which are distasteful may cause a child to develop stomach trouble. The digestive apparatus and the nerves are intimately connected. Again, stupid mothers and nurses insist on a child ' finishing up ' the meal he has been given, for to leave anything is ' naughty ' and ' wasteful '. The nervous child bolts its food so as to avoid being scolded and thus digestive disorders are set up. A child who is neurotic should be allowed to have more of his own way about his food than ordinary robust children who can generally be trusted to demolish anything set before them. Fat is a good thing for the nerves ; therefore let the child have plenty of good bread-and-butter and cream. Fat bacon is often relished, and it is good for children. Cold boiled bacon is an economical dish and highly nutritious. Beef and mutton in moderation may be given, or a small chop or piece of steak. Pork and veal are too close-fibred for delicate little stomachs. Fish may be given freely. It is easy to digest, which is a great consideration, for the digestions of nervous children are easily upset. Chicken is allowable, but ducks and geese are apt to upset the stomach, being rich and oily birds.

Fruit, vegetables, and salads may be given in abundance ; in fact, fruit should form an integral part of every meal. It should not be regarded as an ' extra '. Apples, oranges, and ' soft fruit ' are excellent things for children, and the fruit may be given either raw or stewed. Prunes and figs have

the property of overcoming the constipation with which nervous children are apt to be troubled. An excellent menu for a nervous child's dinner would be : a slice of beef or mutton, or a small chop, with spinach, or cauliflower or spring greens, a biscuit with some butter, then stewed fruit or fruit pudding. Water or diluted orange-juice may be given for a beverage. I am personally in favour of a ' dry ' meal, but some children cannot manage this. Tea and coffee should not be given to *any* children of tender years, and still less to a child with neurotic tendencies. A nervous child cannot have too much dairy products. One good thing about salads is that they are dressed with oil ; and the more fatty articles the nervous child can be induced to eat the better. Vinegar should not be used, but lemon-juice should be substituted for it. I need, perhaps, hardly add that pickles and sauces should find no place on the nursery table ! Hashes, minces, and twice-cooked food are not good for small stomachs. Fat may be supplied in the form of cod-liver-oil, which is a most excellent thing for nervous and delicate children ; but, as some children cannot bear the taste of it, some form of emulsion should be employed, and if iron is combined with the oil so much the better. The person who permits a child to taste wine or beer is mistaken.

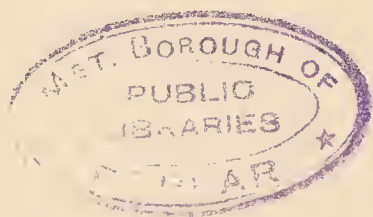
Parents should see that nervous children get plenty of fresh air and exercise. They are apt to be over-studious, and too ready to retire into a corner with a book. This tendency should be checked, and the child encouraged to mix with others in their games and sports. Sleep also is important, and children should obtain at least nine hours every night. Some neurotic

children suffer from insomnia, which is torture to an adult, but ever so much harder on a growing child. Let the mother see that the bed-clothes are neither too light nor too heavy, and induce the child to relax thoroughly when he is in bed. A warm drink at bedtime will draw the blood away from the over-active brain and thus induce a refreshing slumber. Homework done late at night is too often responsible for sleeplessness in children. The system of lengthy home-lessons is a pernicious one and should be abolished. Far better that the time given to them were spent in some interesting and useful hobby.

When the period of adolescence approaches there is considerable danger of neurotic symptoms developing. The youth or girl at the age of puberty is generally engaged in intensive study, and many neuroses may arise. There is a terrific strain upon the system at this period of life—how great few people realize, hence the frequent appearance of neurasthenic symptoms in girls and boys of from fifteen to eighteen who are studying hard to pass examinations and in other ways achieve scholastic success. In an ideal state of existence, the period of adolescence, when the reproductive functions are developing with the consequent strain on the nerves, would be passed out of doors as much as possible. But our social system requires that at this very period the boy or girl should pass a great part of each day among books, and in exercising the brain. This accounts for nervous breakdown among quite young people. It also explains why sometimes boys and girls who have done brilliantly at school never attain any success in after-life. They have exhausted their nervous systems at a most

critical period of their physical development, they are unable to overcome the handicap thus placed upon them. It is essential that parents, nurses, teachers, and guardians should be very patient with the nervous child. He is apt to be 'trying', no doubt, and can be very irritating, but he is not responsible for the instability of his nervous system. Parents and others, remember that the neurasthenic boy or girl is suffering more than you are !

Nervous children should always have happy and cheerful faces around them. A mother or nurse with a scowl on her face is very harmful, as it reflects upon the child. Ugly thoughts make ugly features. In Book VII of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus's *Thoughts* we read : 'An angry scowl on the face is beyond measure unnatural, and, when it is often seen there, all comeliness begins at once to die away, and in the end is so utterly extinguished that it can never be rekindled at all.'



CHAPTER III

HEREDITY

NERVE weakness can be inherited from either parent as can other diseases. Nervous fathers and mothers produce nervous offspring. People who admire the lines of Heine :

She was a harlot and he was a thief
But they loved each other beyond belief . . .

should pause to reflect that the union of thieves and harlots produces more thieves and harlots. Degenerates produce degenerates : whole families are criminals, drunkards, drug-addicts, syphilitics, and so on. There is, or was, one family in Austria which, it is calculated, cost the State thousands of crowns for the maintenance of its various members in prisons, hospitals and madhouses. 'The sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children'—such is the inexorable law of Nature.

The transmission of constitutional disorder may affect the nervous system of the offspring. Where an elderly man is married to a young wife, the children, if any, are prone to nerve instability, as are the children of first-cousins. In fact, the practice of inbreeding, or contracting consanguinous marriages from which spring children is responsible for very much nerve instability. We see some sad examples in the histories of some of the Royal families of Europe. Some young Prince is married to a Princess nearly related to him-

self by blood and the process is repeated in the next generation, and so we evolve a type which is subject to nerve-storms and hysteria, and is indeed very little removed from the mentally-deficient or feeble-minded. Intermarrying in some remote parts of Great Britain is the cause of a great deal of nervous instability. In the aristocracies of several countries the too strict observance of 'caste' has had tragic results. What has kept the British aristocracy so robust and so healthy is that it is always being reinforced by members of the classes below it. A peer marries an actress who is a daughter of the people: the offspring are healthy and charming. The same thing happens when an English aristocrat seeks to regild his coronet with American dollars. The new blood brought into the family enriches it, and the children, if any, are strong and healthy and free from nervous instability. The old German and Austrian aristocracy, which refused to ally itself with anybody who could not show a coat of arms with about sixteen quarterings, produced a large number of neurasthenics, degenerates, criminals and lunatics. Epileptics are sometimes advised to get married in the belief that this will do them good; but the children of such a union will probably be neurasthenic. Furthermore, the added cares and responsibilities of married life are apt to worsen conditions rather than improve them.

It has been proved by statistics that many neurasthenic subjects have numbered among their forefathers certain definite types of defectives. Alcoholism in either parents or grandparents is one cause of nervous weakness—and if there be a family history of tubercle, gout, or syphilis, we need look no further for others.

It has been contended by some authorities that it might be equally proved by statistics that such tainted families may have produced members whose nervous systems are perfectly normal ; but the difficulty in this is that such statistics are not produced by any of these authorities. It is, however, a point that needs consideration. Nobody denies that there are persons who, coming from families with hereditary taint—such as syphilis or gout—retain nervous stability. In these cases no doubt their environment has been such that nervous instability has not developed. These persons, under any great stress or strain, or under the influence of worry, grief, anxiety or some similar condition, might very well have become neurasthenic. They are fortunate in not encountering circumstances which might have had disastrous results. Overwork, overstrain, domestic trouble and other emotional strains bring forth neurasthenic symptoms even in those who have no family history of nerve instability. How much more, then, in those who are burdened with hereditary predisposition ! An American writer says :

‘ The average opinion of heredity is crude indeed. It is generally thought that disease is a direct transmission ; that tuberculosis is transmitted from sire to son ; that the germs of disease in the sire are passed over, at the time of conception, to the son. This is absurd, and makes of Creation or Creator a monstrous Nemesis that delights in destruction, whereas just exactly the opposite is true. Creator or creation is a building-up process, the tendency is to perfection ; and where the child is not an improvement on the parents it is because the environment of the child is

more obstructive to biological processes than the environment in which the parents were brought up."

Be this as it may, there are four chronic diseases which exercise devitalizing influences upon offspring. They may, of course, reproduce themselves in offspring, but in course of time by the admixture of healthy blood this tendency is lessened and ultimately ceases. But while direct transmission may have ceased, the descendants of people so afflicted are apt to have a feeble nervous organization.

It is interesting to note that some famous men have not only been neurasthenics themselves but have transmitted the nervous instability to their children. The poet Cowper, who had periods of melancholia, came of a family with a history of nervousness, but capable of producing brilliant members. Sebastian Bach was a glorious musician, but his family history was one of blindness, alcoholism, and mental instability. The nervously unstable Wilhelm II begat a son like himself.

Which reminds us that children born during or soon after the Great War have been observed to be more nervous than pre-War children. This was no doubt the direct consequence of their parents suffering from nerve-strain. A soldier on leave, fresh from the horrors of the trenches where he has for months been under the most terrible stress, visits his wife, who has already been under the strain of worry, anxiety, and depression. It is no wonder that the result of the visit should be a nervously-unstable child. During the air-raids on London and other large cities, and the naval bombardments of coast towns, there was undoubtedly great nervous strain. It was found that

many citizens suffered from paralysis, accelerated heart-beat, sleeplessness, mental depression and digestive disturbances. Then there was the continual anxiety about dear ones at the front, the dread of bad news, the crushing effect on the spirits of war conditions that dragged on year after year instead of being 'over in a few months' as the optimists predicted in 1914. The oppressive but necessary restrictions and the shortage of food also told on the nervous system of the citizens. Particularly felt was the shortage of fat, for butter and other fats are essential for nerves and brain. Both civilians and soldiers were subjected to an intense and continuous nervous strain for over four years, and it is not to be wondered at that the effects of that strain were shown in their offspring. It would be a wonder were it not so.

The high pressure of modern life undoubtedly increases the amount of neurasthenia, and it looks as if succeeding generations might be increasingly nervous. This would be a terrifying thought if we did not know that science would keep pace with any developments that may occur. Wise words were said by the late Sir Thomas Clouston. They ran :

'One generation may, by living at high pressure, and thereby disregarding hygienic laws, exhaust and use up more than its share of the ancestral energy transmitted to it. It may draw a bill on posterity and not hand on to the next generation enough to pay it. I believe that many of us are now having the benefit of the calm, lazy lives of our forefathers of past generations who stored up energy for us. We, in this too strenuous generation, are using it up.'

Heredity undoubtedly plays such a large part in producing nervous disease that it behoves all married people to take heed of their own lives out of consideration for the young lives they may bring into the world. Worrying and hysterical women are apt to give birth to children who are nervously unstable. Alcoholic fathers may produce alcoholic offspring, or they may not ; but it is certain that the children of such men are more likely than unlikely to be neurotic. Prenatal anxiety, worry, grief and fear in the mother have the same effect. Nervousness may even 'skip' a generation, and descend from grandparent to grandchild. When both parents and grandparents are neurotic, the chances of the child escaping nervous trouble are but small. Mendel's law is inexorable.

Heredity nervousness, if it is not too severe, can be cured by environment and discipline in early life. A child must be taught self-control at the earliest possible age ; it should be impressed on him that it is shameful to lose control of oneself, or to give way to fear, temper, grief or despondency. Needless crying should be dealt with sympathetically, but all the same the nervous child should be taught that he is surrounded by nobody but friends and has nothing to fear. Further remarks on the treatment of the neurotic child are found in another chapter.

Nervous children are found in all walks of life, and not only among the well-to-do. The offspring of artisans, labourers, and small tradesmen may be neurotic, for worry, grief and anxiety are not confined to one class. The endless struggle to 'make ends meet' wears out many a working-class mother ; and malnutrition, anxiety and the constant dread of

unemployment also combine to upset the nervous system. Such nerve weakness is transmitted to the children, and poor people's nervous troubles are not made any better by insufficient food, or food of the wrong kind, and dull and depressing surroundings.

But, whether the sufferer be well-to-do, or poor, or one of the 'idle rich', neurasthenia can be cured, whether it be inherited or acquired. How, will be told in these pages.



CHAPTER IV

NERVOUS DOUBTS AND FEARS

ANXIETY without apparent cause, doubts, and fears are nearly always present where the nerves are disordered. An authority on nerves attributes these in many cases to War service, due to the displacement of the emotion of fear from its original object (i.e. the dangers and terrors of life at the front) to some other. According to this theory the patient has in his mind a large amount of 'free fear'. The emotion cannot express itself in connexion with the things to which it really attaches—the war memories—because the latter are repressed and are not allowed to enter consciousness. Since the emotion (of fear) must express itself in some way, the patient therefore attaches it to something else, and hence a phobia is formed.

The weak point about this theory is that it only applies to cases of men who are veterans of the World War, whereas these phobias have been recognized, discussed and analysed for years before the War. We must look elsewhere for causes in the case of others. Another theorist says: 'Such phobias and obsessions are often the result of a repressed sense of guilt which is connected with some act of the patient's long since passed and forgotten.' This may be so in some cases, but these phobias can attack people who have led blameless lives, and are not conscious of regret or remorse for any criminal act. While we are on this

subject we may note that some acts which bring people into the police-court have been ascribed to neurosis. Kleptomania, or the irresistible desire to steal small articles which are of no value to the sufferer, and could easily be paid for, is one, and another is pyromania, or the compelling wish to set fire to buildings, dwelling-houses, and so on. When dipsomania, the craving for drink, breaks out in a hitherto sober and temperate person, it is also the result of nervous instability.

To send kleptomaniacs or pyromaniacs to prison is wrong, for it produces fixation of the obsession from which the patient is never likely to recover. Proper treatment might have effected a cure.

Allied to the condition which we are discussing, or part of it, is the *folie de doute*. The patient can never be certain of anything. After going to bed he cannot believe that he has locked up the house and made all safe for the night. The obsession is so great that he is compelled to rise from his bed and go round the house testing all the doors and windows. Even when he has done this, he may do a second round in order to make sure that one particular window—the larder window, for example—has not been left open. A patient of this kind has doubts about the legibility of his handwriting, and after addressing an envelope will show it to some friend who happens to be near and ask him if he is sure the postman will be able to read it. It may be mentioned in passing that his writing happens to be particularly clear and legible. In another case, a clever civil engineer, who had many calculations to make about stresses and strains involved in bridge-building could never make up his mind that they were correct. He would go over his figures time

and again, and although the results of his various revisions were always the same and showed his original result to be perfectly correct, he could not bring himself to believe it. The anxiety and distress of mind which this neurosis caused the poor victim may readily be imagined.

Another patient could not make up his mind, while dressing, which sock to put on first, and wasted considerable time hesitating. In this class of neurosis the patient doubts and hesitates about every trivial thing. He cannot make up his mind whether to smoke a cigarette or leave the packet unopened ; and these doubts cause him real distress. Some people are unjustly condemned by their friends and relatives as vacillators and procrastinators when they are only suffering from that form of neurosis known as *folie de doute*.

Among the more common phobias is agoraphobia—literally dread of the market-place ('agora' = a market-place). This simply means that the patient has a nervous dread of open spaces. No reward could induce him to cross such an exposed area as Trafalgar Square, for instance, and the idea of walking in a large meadow would cause his heart to thump, his breath to come more quickly, and the sweat of fear to bedew the palms of his hands. In towns he avoids wide streets and roads ; the narrower an alley the better he likes it. He instinctively seeks the back streets, and prolongs his journey in order to avoid crossing a broad thoroughfare such as Regent Street or Oxford Street in London. One remembers the case of a famous painter, who was a confirmed victim of agoraphobia. Late one night a friend persuaded him to go in a closed

car to his house outside London. The artist did not know what the surrounding country was like, so he consented. In the morning when he looked out of his bedroom window and saw the wide expanse of rolling country he went in a panic to his host and asked to be sent back to London at once—and in a closed car.

This reminds one of another phobia, which causes the patient dread of railway trains. A well-known neurologist mentions a patient of his own, a description of whose case one may be permitted to quote : ‘ There comes to mind an extreme instance in which a nervous individual having to keep an important engagement some thirty miles away was so far unable to spend an hour in the train as to have to plan out an adventurous journey in which by cycle, motor-bus, tram and taxi-cab, he succeeded in accomplishing his purpose and at the same time evading the dreaded railway. A few miles on a bicycle took him to the terminus of a motor-bus route ; then fifteen miles on the road brought him within reach of a tramway service ; a long and weary journey in a succession of trams landed the patient traveller at a stand for taxi-cabs ; whence he concluded the journey in dignified haste. Nothing daunted by the fatigue and discomfort of his strange passage, and beyond the reach of persuasion that he should return by train, this unfortunate victim of obsessing fear reversed his method of travel and ultimately arrived home none the worse for the adventure.’

The knowledge that some people are constantly having these experiences leads us to see how far life can be carried on without trains, and it is, indeed, interesting to note what a long way it is possible to go without using the railway at all so long as one is a

patient observer of roadway services, a cyclist, and withal not afraid of a few miles on foot to complete a necessary connexion here and there. It might be supposed that the convenience of being free from such fears would determine every one who is bothered by them to give up hours, weeks, or even months to that patient mental re-education and self-training which will invariably minimize, when it will not drive away, the morbid dread. Strange to say, the majority are too pessimistic about their difficulty to set out seriously upon the path of self-treatment.

The cause is claustrophobia: which is dread of closed or shut-in spaces. The miserable victim cannot endure small rooms in which he feels stifled. A lift is abhorred, no seat at an entertainment can be accepted unless it is at the end of a row and near an exit. If it is in a box, the door of the box must be left open. The patient is horrified by the feeling of being shut-in which is involved in travelling in a railway train compartment. Victims have been known to throw themselves out when the dread became unbearable, thus the newspapers had to handle a new 'railway mystery'.

There are other common phobias which need a passing mention. Some people have a morbid dread of having unclean hands and will wash them many times a day. In extreme cases they will even get up in the middle of the night to perform their ablutions. This is called *tylophobia*. *Pathophobia* is the terror of catching some infectious disease. In an omnibus or tube carriage they are haunted by the dread that their neighbours may have come from a house where there is some sufferer from an infectious complaint,

and they will make a long detour rather than pass a hospital. Astrophobia makes nervous women crouch trembling in the cellar when there is a thunder-storm. Some people suffer from a rare complaint called bataphobia, in which the patient is obsessed with the dread that the ceiling may come down on him or pictures fall from the wall and strike him.

Some people have a nervous horror of high places and dread even to look out of a window in a room on a fourth or fifth floor. A dread of coming down the stairs is allied with this phobia, though the victim will run upstairs without the slightest distress. The descent of the stairs is impossible unless there is a good stout handrail to which the victim can cling. Creeping things, frogs, cats, and mice are dreaded by some people, especially women. The late Lord Roberts, one of the bravest soldiers that England ever had, and a holder of the V.C., had a horror of cats, and could not remain in the same room with one.

Other well-known examples of phobias are dread of some specific ill such as appendicitis, and the dread of being destitute, which produces misers and those odd characters who starve themselves to death while lying upon bundles of banknotes hidden in the bed. Some people are haunted all their lives by the fear of going blind or 'having a stroke'. These apprehensions are very common and are purely of nervous origin, as is the dread of insanity. A neurasthenic may tell his doctor that he is terribly afraid he is going mad. (It may relieve the minds of thousands haunted by this dread that people who experience this do *not* go mad.) A lunatic is convinced that he is sane, even in the earliest stages of mental disease. Those around

him may notice symptoms approaching to mental breakdown ; but he remains serenely unconscious of them.

Those morbid doubts and fears about one's own conduct which afflict over-conscientious people are in themselves symptoms of nerve-disease. Unfortunately they are seldom so recognized, and the sufferer goes to the clergyman when he should be consulting the neurologist or the psycho-analyst. Self-consciousness in the presence of others may prey upon the neurotic to such an extent that he develops anthrophobia—as it is called—and withdraws himself from contact with his fellows. These doubts and fears result in the cases of which one reads in the newspapers, in which a person becomes a recluse and refuses to speak to anybody, locks himself in his room, or house, and will hold no communion with the outside world. The opposite of this is monophobia, in which the patient hates to be alone. He will enter a shop, make a small purchase and begin a long and aimless conversation with the shop assistant, simply in order that he may not have to bear his own company. This feeling induces women living alone to hold familiar conversations with their servants. 'Somebody to talk to' is the cry ; but a perfectly natural wish for company must not be confused with this morbid state.

Many habits are neurotic in origin. Dr. Johnson used to touch every post in Fleet Street as he passed it ; if he omitted to touch one he had to go back and do so. Sir Frank Lockwood, the great advocate, would twiddle a piece of tape or string in his fingers while he was addressing a jury. Mozart could not compose unless he was arrayed in a certain coat,

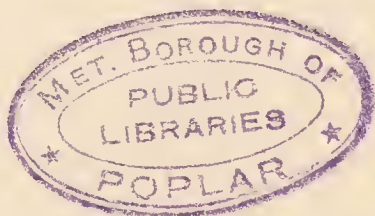
Wagner unless he was in a room upholstered in light colours.

It should be noted that these phobias are entirely independent of reason. They are totally irrational. The unhappy victim *knows* this ; and tries to argue himself out of them. The patient suffering from agoraphobia (for instance) will tell himself over and over again that nothing can hurt if he crosses an open space, and that his fears are totally baseless. All this is in vain. As soon as he attempts to traverse a field or other exposed area, the fears return ; and no argument, no effort of will, can drive them away. The attempt has to be abandoned, and the poor victim is more miserable than before. Indeed, the mere effort of will to conquer the fears fixes them more firmly in the patient's mind, for it accentuates the desire to get away from them. This increases their reality in the consciousness of the patient and they assume more importance. For relatives and friends, who do not take the trouble to understand that the complaint is a nervous one, to make fun of the patient—as some do—is sheer cruelty, and only increase the power of the obsession, whatever it is, from which he suffers. Also, it causes the victim unnecessary misery.

As has been said, to struggle against the obsessing fear is to make it more real. It is a good thing if the patient can be made to think more of the ridiculous side of the phobia. How silly to think, for instance, that harm is going to come to one through merely sitting in a railway carriage, in which millions have travelled without harm ! Ridicule is the best cure for obsessions.

The care of the general health and the proper treatment of unstable nerves will remove the phobia, as a general rule. ' Suggestion ' is another valuable method of combating these distressing fears which cause very real misery to the unhappy victim, though they may seem very absurd to the outside world. Some nervous patients have been very greatly helped by psycho-analysis. This science, about which we are gradually learning more and more, has been of much assistance to nervous sufferers. There are other methods of treatment, such as electricity and massage, which combined with medicines and an appropriate diet, are useful in restoring the nervous system to health.

All these will be treated of in their proper places in this book. Psycho-analysis will have a special chapter later on.



CHAPTER V

HYSTERIA

THE word 'hysteria' is a misleading one. For a long time it was thought that the complaint was peculiar to women, having obtained its name from a Greek word meaning the womb. Now, however, it has come to be recognized that men are also liable to be afflicted with the complaint. Again, 'hysterical' has almost come to be a term of reproach. It is associated with shamming and malingering, with deliberate pretence and imposture. People who are suffering from it will be told by their family that they are only 'putting it on', that they wish to obtain sympathy under false pretences, or that they are malingering in order to escape their ordinary duties. Friends are dissuaded from sympathizing with the patient because 'it only encourages her'. Understanding, not sympathy, is what is required.

Except among archaic survivals, it has now come to be recognized that hysteria is a disease, and must be treated seriously as in every other complaint. Hypochondria is *not* hysteria, and the two words mean totally different things. The sensations, the pains, the agony and distress felt in hysteria are *real*, even though they are caused by *disordered* minds. Let not the use of the word 'real' be misunderstood. If a patient, for instance, under the influence of hysteria, thinks that she has a paralysed arm, the limb will exhibit all the symptoms of paralysis. It will no

doubt help the reader to understand the nature of hysterical symptoms if typical cases, taken from available records, are shown.

(a) A young woman had been going about on crutches, being unable to use one of her limbs. There was pain, and swelling of the right knee, which reached such a pitch that tubercular disease was diagnosed and the girl was advised to have the leg taken off. She was cured by suggestion treatment.

(b) A girl of twenty had constant pain in the right hip following upon a fall. This case yielded to psycho-analysis.

(c) A butcher was brought to a doctor suffering intense pain, for he had slipped while hanging up a piece of beef and had hung by his arm on the sharp hook. Examination proved that his arm was quite uninjured, the hook having caught in his sleeve.

(d) A young woman whose father was paralysed feared that she would suffer the same fate, and gradually lost the use of her legs, and became a helpless cripple. Being treated, in five days she sat up, and after a fortnight recovered the use of her legs and walked.

(e) A case which has its amazing side was that of a girl who lived in bed, paralysed. Learning that the curate of the parish who used to visit her to give her spiritual consolation, took a deep interest in her, she got up and walked, and in time made a good parson's wife.

(f) A young girl was apparently suffering from aphonia (loss of voice). She was unable to speak above a very low whisper. In three days she was cured.

(g) In this case ulcer of the stomach was apparently the complaint. The patient complained of pain and tenderness in the region and always brought up her food after meals. She lay in bed with her legs drawn up, saying that this attitude relieved the pain. All these distressing symptoms were found to be due solely to hysteria.

(h) A 'chef' accidentally scalded his arm with some hot fat. His obsession was that the injury had 'cooked' the nerves of his arm; and he developed a paralysis of his right arm which persisted in spite of treatment. The nerves were in reality quite uninjured, the paralysis being purely hysterical.

(j) A woman suffered with paralysis of both legs, which she declared incapable of movement. She was pulled about in a bath-chair. One day an intoxicated man tried to kiss her as she sat in the chair. She immediately jumped out of it and ran off to her husband.

(k) A man was admitted to a hospital in New York suffering from paralysis in both legs. It was apparently impossible to prove that he could really walk and for a time the physicians were baffled. At last one of them had a bright idea. A bottle of Scotch whisky wrapped in a towel was brought and the contents passed into the patient's stomach by means of a tube. In half an hour he was wandering happily and noisily about the ward.

These few cases will show the curious workings of the hysterical state. Other symptoms are blurring of the sight, diminution of the field of vision (in these cases the victim fears blindness), numbness of the limbs, and the occurrence of patches of skin in which there is

apparently no feeling. In these cases a pin may be driven into the affected part without the patient feeling it at all. In other cases hysteria may simulate many diseases with the utmost fidelity. The patient in these cases is not 'shamming'. If he were pretending, being without expert medical knowledge, he would be unable to simulate the disease so as to deceive the physician. This above disposes of the stupid theory that sufferers from hysteria are malingerers and conscious frauds. Among the diseases which have been simulated by hysteria are : anaemia, consumption, hip disease, lung trouble, heart weakness, gastric ulcer, St. Vitus's dance (chorea), neuralgia, abdominal disease, intestinal disorder, and tubercular disease of the joints.

Some hysterical subjects are dominated by a furious desire to be the centre of interest—to be surrounded by admiring and sympathizing friends. To this end a woman will make all kinds of sensational and false statements, calculated to alarm and astonish her hearers and draw all eyes upon her. She makes the wildest accusations against innocent people, strikes attitudes and calls wildly for sympathy and compassion in her wholly imaginary distresses. This type loves to pose as a deeply-injured and persecuted heroine, and to keep up the character she never hesitates to paint those around her in the blackest colours. It is obvious that one cannot be an injured person unless somebody has injured one. The hysteria evolves from her own imagination some injury, and thus casts aspersions on some perfectly innocent person who has never had the slightest intention of injuring her.

In some cases of hysteria there are terrible convulsions in which the patient throws herself about, kicking, tearing her hair, and screaming with periods of wild laughter. The opposite to this is the trance-like state, in which the patient lies completely immobile with closed eyes. This state may continue for days, or even weeks. This kind of manifestation is more often found in women than in men. Sometimes such a case reaches the keen ears of the newspaper Press, and the place at which the patient lies is invested by reporters and photographers. Morbid-minded persons flock to the spot and the parents or guardians of those affected drive a roaring trade. The fakirs of India are capable of throwing themselves into a trance-like state, in which they will suffer themselves to be buried alive in the earth without food or drink for a period of days, or lie in a nude state on a bed of nails.

Can people die from hysterical diseases? Some doctors deny it; but a celebrated authority, in a lecture delivered at the Sanitary Institute some time ago, has affirmed that they can. He quoted this case: 'A young lady tottered into the out-patient department of one of our large London hospitals not long since, followed by her mother in an agony of mind, having an open tin of "Brand's" in one hand and a spoon in the other. She had brought this because her daughter was dying from a contraction of the gullet, and she wished to show that not even a little jelly could be swallowed. The girl was reduced to a skeleton, and would certainly have died from neuromemesis if not relieved, for there can be no doubt that people die solely from hysterical affections, though some may question it. After using appropriate means to affect

the mind indirectly, in about half an hour the patient was sitting in one of the wards, eating a large plateful of boiled mutton, potatoes, and turnips, with 'hospital pudding' to follow.'

Then he added these wise words : ' It is cases like these, seen by men wholly ignorant of the powers, and perhaps of the existence of the unconscious mind, that are necessarily considered fraudulent and the patients "malingerers" ! '

It is a curious fact that some of the greatest historical events have been due to hysteria. Joan of Arc showed symptoms of hysteria, and so did Peter the Hermit, with some of his followers, notably those who instigated the pitiful Children's Crusade. The dancing mania which spread over Central Europe in the Middle Ages was undoubtedly hysterical in origin.

A distressing and intractable type of hysteria is that known as anxiety-hysteria. The face of the subject is wrinkled with apprehension, with twitching of the facial muscles, and a tendency to perspire excessively. The pupils of the eyes are dilated. The patient trembles in a more or less degree and frequently in the lower limbs. A loud noise in her neighbourhood, of a sudden kind, will startle her so much that she falls over. She is also subject to stammering, and is often at a loss for a word. There is pain of an epigastric order, and sometimes vomiting, or even chronic diarrhoea, though this is not common.

Insomnia is almost always present in anxiety-hysteria. The patient has the greatest difficulty in getting to sleep, and when she does so she is disturbed by nightmares. Frequent headaches are another

symptom, as is also disinclination for any exertion. The patient finds that she is more subject to fatigue than when she is in normal health and a very short walk 'tires her out', as she expresses it.

A very common symptom is deep mental depression. This, however, can be removed by cheerful surroundings and conversation. Sometimes the patient talks about her disgust for life and her intention of committing suicide, but never carries it into effect. The instinct of self-preservation will prevent this. Anxiety-hysteria was frequently met with in soldiers who had been shell-shocked, or buried in a shell-hole. Many physicians tried to treat this by giving sedatives and urging them to 'forget the war'. This last was impossible to carry out. There arose a new school which urged the patient to talk freely of his war experiences, and in this way the repression was removed. In addition hypnotism was practised, in cases in which the patient could not bear to tell about his experiences because the memory of them was so intensely painful to him.

Hypnotism has also been used in other cases of hysteria, also electricity and change of air and scene have been recommended. The great remedy for hysteria, however, is auto-suggestion. There are great advantages in this. The patient fixes his mind on becoming free of his complaint, and constantly declares himself as happy, healthy, and free of all neurotic symptoms. In this connexion, Coué-ism may be tried. Above all, the patient must combat any obsession by bringing his reason to bear upon it, and by telling himself over and over again how foolish he is to harbour such ideas, and firmly endeavouring

to banish them from his mind. Admittedly, this is very difficult, and such advice may seem a counsel of perfection, but that it can be accomplished may be seen from the following anecdote, which is related by a well-known and prominent physician :

‘ I had some time ago a favourite nurse, who always had a superstition that she would die of typhoid fever. She contracted it at last when nursing a bad case of mine, and lay in a county hospital apparently dying, in the third week of the disease, in a low typhoid condition, and with every appearance of collapse, but with the mind clear.

‘ I went in to see her for the first time and found her much depressed.

‘ She told me she was about to die.

‘ “ Certainly,” I said.

‘ She looked up and replied, “ Yes, but I mean it : I always said I should.”

‘ “ Then of course you will,” I retorted.

‘ She stared, and said, “ Don’t you mind ? ”

‘ I said, “ What is the use of minding ? You are going to die if you say so ? ”

‘ “ But saying so does not make me die,” she answered.

‘ “ Perhaps it does,” I replied, “ for if you said you wouldn’t die you would probably live.”

‘ I saw, as far as I could judge, she had reached that point when the throwing of the will into either balance would determine the issue.

‘ “ Do you mean that ? ” she said.

‘ “ Yes, I do,” I replied, “ and what is more, unless you say so, I won’t come and see you again. It is

now half-past eleven, and if now at this hour of morning you turn your mind the other way and determine to live and not die, I'll do all I can to help you. You shall have another nurse, and I'll get the doctor to let you have a little champagne. But this resolve must come from you."

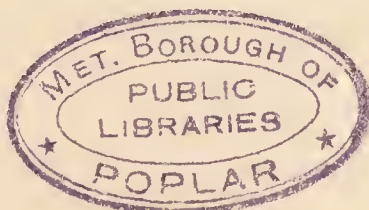
' She looked at me hard in the face, and seeing that I meant it, and believing me in her heart, she said, in deepest earnest, "I will," and from that hour she steadily gained strength and soon got well.'

This is a striking case, but many similar have occurred, and nothing is impossible to the human will. Use of the will, with suggestion from outside, as well as auto-suggestion, will work wonders, but it is an essential thing that the patient should have perfect faith in the medical man. A doctor who is off-hand, who pooh-poohs the symptoms—for it is to be remembered that the imaginary complaints are very real to the patient—will do more harm than good, and often tend to fix the phobias from which the patient is suffering rather than remove them. A firm, yet sympathetic manner, in the doctor reassures and soothes the patient, especially when the recital of his symptoms is listened to calmly and patiently. Hysterical women are invariably selfish, always putting themselves forward as paragons of virtue, whilst their husbands, friends, and relations are just the reverse. In most cases, if full inquiry be made, a history of drink, epileptic fits, suicide or insanity will be found in such a woman's parents or relations. Disorders of digestion are common in hysterical women, who complain of a ball rising from the pit of the stomach towards

the throat and remaining there, causing a feeling of suffocation. This is known as the 'globus hystericus.' These feelings of throat obstruction are common and cause some patients to refuse food, as they say they cannot swallow. The vomiting of hysteria occurs either during or immediately after food and is rarely accompanied by nausea. In such cases rest after meals is beneficial and the plate should not be piled up with too much food. It is far better for the patient to have a little food served daintily than to have twice the quantity put before her in an inartistic manner. Talking of the hysterical woman one authority says that she is changeable, and, with her, *all* is caprices ; she loves without measure those whom she will soon hate without reason. She is extravagantly affectionate or callous and indifferent by turns : selfish, clamouring for sympathy, aggrieved and infuriated by any thwarting of her immediate desires ; enthusiastic or overjoyed, or needlessly depressed and abased by inadequate causes ; arrogant, boastful, and apparently determined on one day, and on the next timid, self-depreciatory, and irresolute. She is the prey of every passing fancy or mood and soon becomes exhausted by emotional excesses. Yet unless supplied with a daily menu of stirring feelings she speedily becomes bored, introspective.

A large number are given to lying and slandering, and stories of the most extraordinary character are invented by them and denied the next day. They exaggerate most things a hundredfold, and what to a normal woman would be an ache to them is agony. They cannot say they feel cold but prefer to say they are 'frozen to the marrow'. 'I am the most miserable

woman in the world'; 'My husband is the worst husband in the world'; 'I haven't got a rag to my back', are common expressions with hysterics. Hysterical women always wish to be in the limelight; they seldom give way to their attacks unless other people are present. At any party they wish to interfere and 'run it'—they are never content to be 'one of the crowd'. If standing on one's head at a night club would attract every one's attention, and they had made special preparations for a display of artistic 'lingerie' they would not be adverse from such a vulgar display. Anything to gain attention and be the centre of attraction! Dr. Buzzard's description of an hysterical girl has always appealed to me as the best. Succinctly he says: 'Intelligence good, apprehension quick, memory good, judgment weak, no ability of concentration of thought for any length of time. Accuracy and perseverance are deficient. Emotions too easily excited and incapable of control. The expression of emotions is incongruous—tears at ridiculous subjects and laughter at tragic. There is great desire for the sympathy and attention of others. Sometimes there is exaggeration in varying degree, which, however, is probably part of the disease.'" These cases are very deplorable and account for a large percentage of unhappy marriages but they can be cured though the treatment may be a very lengthy one. Suggestion, diet, electricity, artificial sunlight treatment, psychoanalysis, and some drugs may restore an hysterical patient into a normal person.



CHAPTER VI

CONTROL OF THE EMOTIONS

PEOPLE of great self-control are never likely to suffer from nervous ailments, and, on the other hand, people who worry and excite themselves about every trifle are well on the way to a nervous breakdown. Self-controlled people, though it may be only subconsciously, say to themselves : ' I will not worry : I will not allow all these cares and responsibilities to weigh me down ; I will not give way to morbid fears and apprehensions of the future ; I will maintain an equable, calm and unruffled mind fully conscious that I am perfectly capable of carrying out all the tasks that devolve upon me, and of tackling and overcoming any difficulties that may arrive or any emergencies that may happen.' Thrice happy is the man whose powerful will enables him to think thus, for he is indeed master of his fate and captain of his soul. A strong-willed man is less likely than others to become the victim to neurasthenia ; and, in addition, it is more than probable that he will maintain good health, and stave off senility and the end of all things. He has more chance of escaping disease, and if attacked by it can often *will* himself back to health.

It is essential that the emotions be controlled, for neurasthenia, it is held, is due wholly to psychological factors, and these factors are controlled by the emotions. To illustrate this, let us take the cases of some typical

neurasthenics which have been noted by physicians, and consider the causes of the nervous state :

(a) In a business man—disagreements with his wife to whom he was devoted.

(b) In a woman—unexpected death of dearly-loved husband.

(c) In a journalist—worry about responsibilities.

(d) In a tradesman—serious domestic troubles, which ended in his divorcing his wife.

(e) In a young married woman—violent disagreement with her husband of whom she was very fond.

(f) In a workman—an accident in which a work-mate was killed.

(g) In a young unmarried woman—an unfortunate love-affair.

It is of no use to prolong this list. Worry and anxiety, combine with violent emotional disturbances to produce neurasthenia. Worry is an important factor, and that is why it is essential that people should strive to cure themselves of the worrying habit with all their might. Worrying people are melancholy and despondent. They lack the will-power to face and conquer their difficulties. They are also undecided and slow in making up their minds. They not only hesitate about making a bold decision, but are apt to regret it when made and to wish that they had 'done the other thing'. Because they are hesitant and weak of will their affairs are apt to go awry. This has the bad effect of increasing the despondency. 'I knew how it would be—nothing goes right with me,' says the sufferer, who falls to a deeper depth of depression still. This notion that his affairs are bound to go

wrong may become a fixed idea or obsession with the victim ; and then there is the danger of mental instability, which may land the sufferer in a home for mental diseases.

Worry attacks everybody—even athletes and boxers, who are supposed to have ‘ no nerves ’. A well-known and popular boxer gave very disappointing displays sometimes which were due to what we would call in an actor ‘ stage fright ’. H. M. Abrahams, in his work on *Training for Athletes*, has some remarks on the nervousness which attacks even splendidly trained men on the running track or in the boxing ring. He reminds us that many really fine athletes never educate themselves to face ordeals with equanimity. Nervousness of this kind leads to the most unpleasant sensations and may produce obstinate insomnia. In any case the victim is incapable of reproducing anything like his real ‘ form ’. Some men, well trained, may reduce themselves to a condition of nervousness in which they are a source of misery to themselves, an object of contempt to all with whom they come in contact, and an occasion of despair to those who rely on them. ‘ Their inclusion in any team,’ comments Mr. Abrahams, dryly, ‘ is limited to one appearance.’

Love-affairs are apt to cause emotional disturbances of the nervous system, as we have seen in the list of cases given above. Jealousy and fear of losing the loved one are potent causes of neurasthenia. The jealous wife, as I have said, sees only around her designing women whose one object in life is to win her husband away from her, and this anxiety with its accompanying depression is apt to have a detrimental effect on the nerves. One of the characters in a

well-known play by Sir Arthur Pinero says : ' All jealous women are mad.' This in a pathological sense is a theatrical exaggeration : a woman of a jealous disposition is incapable of seeing facts in their true light. The German proverb says ' Jealousy is a passion that seeks with zeal what produces misery.'

The effect of jealousy upon people of small self-control is sometimes terrible. People do not all feel jealousy in the same way ; sometimes it is moral, sometimes physical, and the man who suffers from the latter will sometimes kill himself rather than bear the pain. Here is an instance mentioned by M. Louis Proal, one of the judges of the Court of Appeal of Riom (Puy-de-Dôme) and a leading French jurist. A man of thirty, passionately attached to his wife, did not suspect her behaviour but thought that she was in love with another man. The idea caused him such intense suffering that he ended by blowing out his brains. This is interesting as showing that jealousy is not confined to the fear of losing the physical possession of the loved one, for the man had no reason to suspect his wife of infidelity. It was only the fear that he had lost her affection that drove him to suicide. On the other hand, physical jealousy leads to murder, as is instanced by the number of men who kill unfaithful wives or sweethearts. Nay, more, a love-sick youth will sometimes attack with murderous intent a girl who has desired to drop his acquaintance. ' If I can't have you, no one else shall ! ' is the usual cry of the besotted and desperate young man.

Loss of control in matters of sex, then, will turn man or woman into a neuropathic. It is difficult to preach self-control in these matters ; for what we call

love is a masterful passion, and is apt to carry one away. Still, the victim of jealousy or unrequited affection should strive with might and main for self-control. Later on it will be explained how a greater degree of control may be attained by the earnest striver. It is equally important to control the emotions of hate as those of love. Envy and malice are two other passions which wreck the tranquillity of the mind and bring on nervous breakdowns. Violent or bitter thoughts, secretly nourished, react on the thinker, and are capable of producing changes of a detrimental type. They can actually cause toxins in the tissues. Remorse is another emotion which can and does lead to neuropathic conditions. That he has done wrong may weigh on a man's conscience to such an extent that existence becomes unbearable. Thieves and embezzlers have been known to surrender to the police rather than carry about the burden of an unconfessed misdeed. Indeed, there have been instances of criminals who have met the officers sent to arrest them with the words: 'I am glad you have come. I shall be glad to get the matter off my mind.' Nay, even murderers, though knowing that they are taking the first step to the gallows, will voluntarily give themselves up when they are in a neurasthenic condition brought on by being haunted by their crime. They are neuropathic subjects, just as much as the business-man who is haunted by the thought of financial disaster, or the housewife who is oppressed by her responsibilities in regard to her house, husband, and children.

It is as well to beware of being over-conscientious, or morbidly aware of small sins. Many people are

given to magnifying trifles, and turning molehills into mountains. They torture themselves with vain regrets for having misjudged a friend, when the friend has long ago forgotten the incident. These morbidly-conscientious people are capable of feeling remorse for some trifling peccadillo for years. They should conquer this feeling by an effort of the will. Nervously conscientious people are a misery to themselves as well as a nuisance to others. They will be tormented by doubts as to whether they have offended lover, friend or acquaintance, or whether their employer is losing confidence in them. They will apologize so profusely for the slightest slip that the person apologized to feels quite embarrassed. They worry as to whether their work is deteriorating and about many other things of this nature. A strong effort of the will is what is required to put an end to these morbid conditions, and here a little Coué-ism would be of help. The patient should tell himself repeatedly that there is nothing to worry about: unless the neurasthenia is too far advanced this will do good. Or perhaps the patient has a strong-minded friend who can talk to him (or her) in a reassuring manner; exaggerated sympathy is worse than anything for neurasthenia and does a good deal of harm.

Egotistical people are apt to be neurasthenic and irritable. The thought that they are not attracting the attention they ought to (in their own opinion) worries them. The remedy in this case is to try to think less of themselves and more of other people. Those who do good to others are always cheerful. The habit of brooding over troubles should be shaken off, also those other habits of haste and hurry. They

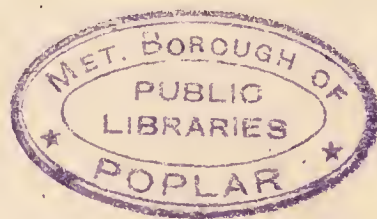
are bad habits. The man who is always rushing about in a violent hurry, telling everybody that he 'hasn't a moment', is not only showing that he is not efficient but is doing serious damage to his nervous system. So many people are affected by this craze for 'bustle' that it ought to be written up in letters of gold in every business house that the man in a hurry is an incapable and inefficient man. The truly efficient is never hustled. When one visits the heads of big businesses, captains of industry whose names are household words, one does not find them dashing frantically about. They are calm, cool, and apparently in the enjoyment of infinite leisure. It is the man of mental mediocrity, the puny man whom only a small amount of responsibility threatens to overwhelm, that one finds breathless with haste, and telling everybody how 'rushed' he is. The man who keeps calm and refuses to be hustled is the one who will escape the neurasthenia which is the curse of the present age. In an address to some students at Yale, the British scientist, Sir William Osler said, as I have observed before: 'One of the saddest of life's tragedies is the wreckage of the career of the young collegian by worry, hurry, bustle, and tension, the human machine driven by day and night, as no sensible fellow would use his motor.' These are wise words, and should be taken to heart by all who wish to preserve their health and faculties to a serene old age. This reminds me that lessons in control of the emotions cannot begin too early. A child who is spoiled and allowed to do just as he likes will suffer for it in after-life. When he goes out into the great world he will be bewildered to observe that *it* does not spoil him and allow him to do as he likes.

And this comes as a great shock, which may sow the seeds of ill-health and neurasthenia. The great philosopher Locke said over three hundred years ago : ' The principle of all virtue and excellency lies in the power of denying ourselves the satisfaction of our own desires when reason does not authorize them. To make this practice easy and familiar begin early by making children submit their desires and go without their longings even from their very cradle.'

Thus is instilled self-control, one of the greatest of all virtues. The child should be taught to take disappointments and set-backs cheerfully, and not to indulge in grumbling. A whining complaining child is a great nuisance in the house ; and is being allowed to spoil his own character and to prepare for a life of disappointments. He will grow up a being prone to self-pity, which is a weakening habit to get into. Self-pity in the neurasthenic is one of the greatest obstacles in the way of restoration to health. A strong effort of will must be made to get out of the habit, which often springs from self-analysis and introspection. These tendencies must be firmly resisted ; and the sufferer must strive to cultivate '*self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control, self-respect*'.

What are we to do then in order to gain control of our errant emotions, and prevent them from attaining the mastery over us ? To cultivate the will is almost impossible to some nervous people ; they seem to be driven by some force outside themselves. They should be occupied in some way that uses the hands as well as the mind. They might, for instance, make a hobby of wood-carving or pottery. These and similar occupations conserve the nervous energy by

holding the attention, bring into play the co-ordinate faculties, and stimulate interest in creative work. If a victim is not clever with his hands he might go in for collecting or take up some interesting study such as that of languages. Such emotions as anger and resentment should be repressed as much as possible ; nor should the affections be allowed to run riot. When a person is thoroughly neurasthenic there is an almost complete loss of will-power ; but this condition must be fought against with every ounce of strength. Every victim of neurasthenia is the target for thoughtless raillery. People who do not understand his state do not hesitate to say that he is not really trying to control his thoughts and emotions. This is very hurtful, because it is utterly untrue. The struggle is a perpetual one ; and that it is so often fruitless is due to the fact that it is waged so strenuously that it becomes exhausting. It is also waged without method—that is to say, without the requisite understanding of the ego. It is one of the objects of this little book to show how self-mastery can be obtained, and the trying and distressing nerve-weakness vanished. It is, however, not much use to begin at the worry end. Control of the emotions should, as has been said, begin in the childhood of the individual—nay, as Locke said three hundred years ago, ‘ in the very cradle ’.



CHAPTER VII

DIET IN RELATION TO NEURASTHENIA

GOOD, sound nerves depend, to a greater extent than most people imagine, upon nutrition. In fact, many nervous patients have been cured by being put on a diet. There is no special diet that is 'good for the nerves'. Plain and nourishing food is all that is required; and the neurasthenics are susceptible to the good effects of a 'mixed' diet. To show how intimately nerves and nutrition are connected, let us instance the number of girls and young women who have become neurasthenic through adhering to the 'slimming' diet which was deemed to be necessary for the attainment of the fashionable slim, straight-up-and-down figure. Modern women foolishly lived on a starvation diet, with the result that their nerves were not properly nourished and these victims of fashion became neurasthenic. They were irritable and 'jumpy', suffered from insomnia and would start at the slightest sound. These 'diets' (so-called) were, some of them, most extraordinary. One consisted of lean lamb chops and pineapple taken twice a day, and another one was made up largely of lemon-juice and spinach. Fattening foods like cream, butter, and bacon were given up entirely; potatoes were left out of the dietary altogether, and toast Melba and gluten biscuits took the place of bread.

A return to a normal diet in these cases is *all* that is required to restore the patient to health. The menu

should contain sugar and fat, for they are excellent nerve foods. When a woman has become thoroughly neurasthenic, some physicians recommend the Weir-Mitchell treatment. This consists in removing the nervous patient from her friends, and isolating her, with no communication with the outside world in the form of letters either written or received, no papers or visitors. She is kept in bed for four or five weeks, during which time she is fed abundantly (the inventor of the system insists on 'abundant' feeding).

During the first seven days in bed the diet consists chiefly of milk in large quantities, advancing from a quart on the first day to four or five pints on the eighth. The milk is administered in divided doses, from two to ten ounces, being given every two hours. On the tenth day the victim of disordered nerves begins with solid food again. She may have a chop, a fried sole, or some egg dish, with plenty of bread and butter. On the fifteenth or sixteenth day an era of full meals begins : soup, fish, meat or poultry, and stewed fruit, and besides this two quarts of milk is to be given. Massage and electric treatment are given ; but the main part of the treatment consists of bed and plenty of good, nourishing food. The patient may refuse to eat, so a nurse or attendant should be at the bedside at meal-time, to ensure that the food is taken.

Some good results have been obtained by this treatment, but one cannot endorse such large quantities of milk. There are many objections to the use of milk by an adult human being. For one thing, it is apt to coagulate into a solid mass in the stomach, or the alimentary canal ; and the formation of clots leads to constipation. Constipation is followed by fermentation

and the general health is gravely affected. Again, milk is very bulky, and holds too much albumen and too little of the carbohydrates and organic salts.

In arranging a diet for the nervous patient special attention should be paid to fats. In addition to the fats contained in the food, olive-oil and cod-liver-oil should be freely administered. A salad dressed with pure olive-oil is good for neurasthenic patients, which brings us to the point that plenty of vegetables should be included in the dietary, as they aid digestion and also assist the proper elimination of the food. Some of the 'green meats', such as lettuce or celery, are quite valuable; but all fruits and vegetables are good. The dietary of the nervous patient should include plenty of liquid, as it helps in the elimination of food and also flushes out the system. Tea and coffee are not the best of beverages for the neurasthenic. Taken in excess (and it may surprise our teetotal friends to know that tea and coffee can be taken in excess just like alcoholic liquors) they must cause harm. Palpitations, giddiness, intense excitement and gastrointestinal disturbances follow the excessive use of tea or coffee, with insomnia, and great irritability. It has been well remarked that while tea and coffee may assist the tired brain-worker to keep up the output of good work, they do but unlock and use up stores of nerve-energy which Nature has been keeping in store for some emergency. When these stores have been squandered, Nature exacts the penalty—generally in the form of nerve-exhaustion.

We now come to the effect of alcoholic drink on the nervous system. It is well-known that the excessive use of alcohol is enough in itself to produce nervousness.

Some of its effects are delirium tremens, Korsakoff's psychosis, a mental disturbance with which is associated trembling of the hands and feet, neuritis, and even insanity. Men and women have been known to drink themselves into the asylum, and prison, for excessive alcoholism has a direct destructive effect on the brain-cells, which degenerate and lose all their vitality. On the other hand, good, sound wine and beer have their uses. During the great European War the soldiers of France received a pint of wine a day as part of their rations, and rum was frequently issued to the English troops. A well-known French physician's opinion of the value of wine in the daily food ration is incontestable. He claims for it stimulating properties of the first order, which no other food possesses in the same degree. He says that wine acts upon the whole organism, as well as on the digestive organs, in a generally tonic manner. Ale and wine, by reason of their flavour and the aromatics or tonics they contain increase the appetite, and the flow of the saliva, and the gastric juices. A man may come home from his work too tired to eat, but a glass of sherry restores the appetite and increases the sense of well-being. The evening meal is attacked in a hearty manner, and, being enjoyed, does good.

As an appetizer and invigorator wine and beer, when used moderately, are of considerable value to the aged, the convalescent, to those who lead a sedentary life and to those whose stomach has lost its tone owing to worry, mental anxiety, overwork, the strain of town life and similar causes. Larger doses hinder digestion, dull the appetite, and cause indigestion or catarrh.

In the dietary of the nervous subject, therefore, a

place may be found for a little good Burgundy, claret or bottled stout. Spirits are not recommended, neither is champagne, of which the stimulating effect does not last.

Here is a typical diet sheet which has been advocated for people who are 'run-down' (as they call it) or nervous :

Breakfast : Eggs, or fat bacon, or both, plenty of bread and butter, cocoa to drink.

Midday Dinner : Roast or boiled meat or poultry, with potatoes and some such vegetables as cabbage, cauliflower, spinach, peas, beans, onions, artichokes or asparagus, stewed fruit to follow, with quantities of cream : to drink (if used to it), Guinness stout, Burgundy or claret.

(N.B.—There is no necessity for alcoholic drink at all if the patient is not accustomed to its use.) In the summer time, cold fat meat and a salad can be substituted for the hot meal.

Early Supper : Cold ham or fish with butter sauce, or tripe and onions, plenty of brown bread and butter, cocoa, or drink as at dinner.

NERVOUS DISEASES

There are certain specific nervous complaints in which diet is of the first importance. Some notable authorities assert that epileptic attacks may be traced to dietetic errors in childhood. The victims of epilepsy should have digestible and nourishing food, but meat only once or twice a week. Plenty of bread-and-butter,

cream and fresh vegetables and fruit should be taken. Alcoholic drink must be strictly avoided. Herewith follows the daily dietary of an epileptic colony in the South of England, with which I need hardly say I do not agree. An epileptic, in my opinion, should not be given meat at all—or any stimulants.

Breakfast : Oatmeal porridge with milk ; bread and butter.

Dinner : Roast or boiled beef or mutton, with potatoes and cabbage, followed by rice, sago or tapioca pudding, or jam-roll.

Supper : Pudding and soup.

On Fridays fish is given for dinner instead of beef or mutton.

In locomotor ataxia a generous diet should be given with special attention to foods containing fat—e.g., bacon, fat meat, butter, and cream. Light wines, or lager beer, are permitted if the patient is used to beverages containing alcohol with his meals.

Sleeplessness (insomnia) is a well-known symptom of disordered nerves, and causes great suffering, but in many cases it arises less from disordered nerves than from a disordered stomach. If the digestion is affected, if acidity and flatulence are present, sleep will with reluctance visit the pillow. Some people find that they cannot sleep well if they have supper late ; with others it is the very reverse—they cannot sleep if they go to bed on an empty stomach, as the saying goes. The best way to woo sleep is to relax as much as possible, and banish all disagreeable thoughts from the mind. Think of pleasant things that have

happened in the past, for to think of the future is to ensure a wakeful night. A cup of cocoa and a biscuit will sometimes help to summon sleep, or in the case of elderly people some hot whisky-and-water.

There are several fallacies connected with the wide subject of diet for the nervous. One is that nervous people should eat a good deal of fish, as it contains phosphorus which is a nerve-nutrient. This is a great error. There is not enough phosphorus in a fish diet to make any difference; and any ample nourishing diet is a good nerve diet. In prescribing a diet for the neurasthenic, personal idiosyncrasies must be taken into consideration. Some people cannot eat cheese, or mushrooms or strawberries or shell-fish. Others know that certain things upset their digestions, and yet they cannot resist them if they are on the table. 'I know that I shall suffer for this later on', they say, and yet they do not refrain from them. This is foolish self-indulgence. On the other hand, there are a number of nervous subjects who only fancy that certain foods upset them. These subjects are apt to exaggerate their digestive troubles or to worry about them most unnecessarily. The worry increases the neurasthenia, and so a vicious circle is formed.

The neurasthenic, too, is especially liable to be affected by any food—foods that may happen to be excellent. He readily takes up vegetarianism, fruitarianism, or any other 'ism' which happens to be fashionable at the moment. He is at the mercy of every crank with a theory about food, and listens eagerly to any suggestion. Other neurasthenics put their faith in certain patent food-preparations and are miserably unhappy if there is not a tin of their favourite

preparation handy. They should not be encouraged to attach too much importance to these things, which some assume a totally false importance in their minds.

Consideration of the subject of food and drink naturally leads to consideration of tobacco. It must be conceded at once that over-smoking will have terrible effects on the nervous headaches. While some heavy smokers seem to escape all ill-effects, the repeated consumption of small doses of nicotine, which is a deadly poison, undoubtedly in other individuals affects the nerves. Symptoms of nerve-poisoning by tobacco are tremors of hands and lips, stumbling in walking, and headaches of a neuralgic type. Highly-strung men, artists, literary persons, and the like find tobacco a soothing herb ; but over-indulgence has the opposite effect. Cigarettes have a particularly harmful effect on some constitutions, producing a curious lethargy, causing the sufferer to scamp or neglect his work. The habit of inhaling the smoke into the lungs is also productive of ill-effects.

To sum up, the neurasthenic should have a good nourishing diet, containing plenty of the fats. Fat is a splendid nerve-food.

He may be allowed a little good wine or beer—if he has always been accustomed to it.

Spirits and liqueurs should be barred ; and smoking permitted only in moderation.

Regularity in the hours of meals should be insisted on.



CHAPTER VIII

THE EFFECT OF DRUGS, ALCOHOL, AND STIMULANTS

WE have already discussed some of the predisposing causes of neurasthenia ; but one of them—the drug-habit—is of so great an importance that it deserves a chapter to itself. The drugs which affect the nerves are many, and include caffeine and theine, which are the principles of coffee and tea, nicotine the principle of tobacco, alcohol (contained in wines, spirits, and other distilled or fermented beverages), cocaine, morphine, heroin, opium, and other substances. Let us take the first-named first. Caffeine and theine stimulate the brain, and cause ideas to flow quickly and readily ; hence they are dear to men of letters and other thinkers. Dr. Johnson's prowess as a tea-drinker was the subject of remark among his contemporaries. He also used to drink his share of wine ; but became in his later years an abstainer from it. Then it was that he became so enamoured of tea ; thus the great philosopher and wit was only exchanging one poison for another. Balzac indulged copiously in black coffee ; he would sit up all night writing and drinking cup after cup of the strongest coffee from a jug which he kept on the hob.

Tea and coffee undoubtedly are useful in the strictest moderation ; in excess they are definitely toxic. Insomnia is the first symptom of neurasthenia which attacks the slave of the infusion ; then come palpita-

tions, tremors, jerky movements, sensations of 'fullness' in the head, and inability to concentrate the thoughts. Excessive indulgence in tea may even bring on a kind of delirium ; and in the remote districts of Ireland, where men and women alike drink tea that has been ' stewing ' on the hob from morning till night, cases of actual insanity have been traced to the immoderate use of the beverage. At one time ' smart ' women in London smoked tea-cigarettes, but one case of mental breakdown after another so scared those who indulged in the habit that it died out. It is an ironic commentary on the weakness of our fallen human nature that people who habitually drug themselves with tea and coffee actually think themselves morally far superior to those fellow-unfortunates who habitually drug themselves with alcohol ! Why this should be no one can know. A writer on neurasthenia has said : ' It cannot be gainsaid that a steaming cup of well-made coffee, taken with the breakfast, helps materially to evacuate the bowel, but aside from this there is absolutely nothing to be said in its favour.' This is a sweeping statement ; but it is made by an American doctor, who has been living among a colony of dyspeptics and knows that dyspepsia is the result of wrong habits of eating and drinking, including the immoderate use of iced water and of coffee. While healthy people can take a moderate amount of tea and coffee, to a neurasthenic subject these beverages are a poison and should be absolutely forbidden. No faltering can be permitted ; tea and coffee must be cut out completely from the dietary.

The same applies to alcohol. This particular toxin is apt to cause nerve trouble. Immoderate drinkers

are subject to spasms of nervousness in which they are unable to face the noise and bustle of a crowded street, but will turn aside into unfrequented by-ways. This is not to be mixed up with the agoraphobia treated in another chapter, which is quite another form of neurasthenia. The sufferer described above quite recovers his nerve when he has absorbed a little more alcohol, and then the vicious circle is formed : intoxication at night, tremors and nervousness in the morning, which do not vanish until the patient is semi-intoxicated again. But some permanent forms of neurasthenia may be caused by immoderate use of the drug known as alcohol. In these, which may include neuritis as well as true neurasthenia, the first step towards cure must be to cut out intoxicating drink altogether. It is sad to have to notice that many brilliant and highly-strung people are apt to over-indulge in alcoholic stimulants. Edgar Allan Poe was a hopeless drunkard, so was George Morland, one of the most brilliant artists that England ever had. The poet Swinburne was drinking himself to death when Theodore Watts-Dunton rescued him by weaning him away from brandy with wine, and then weaning him away from wine with beer. The list can be indefinitely extended. One of the most esteemed artists of our time died in an asylum, hopelessly insane as the result of alcoholism. And, of course, many totally undistinguished people have been removed raving to the madhouse consequent upon constant potations of whisky, brandy, gin, and rum. It is not on record that anybody ever went insane as the result of the drinking of beer ; but for all that, the heavier beers should be avoided by the neurasthenic. People

with unimpaired nerves may take a glass of whisky-and-soda or wine with impunity, but to the neurasthenic it is poison. Well known is the nervous depression which follows a too-convivial evening, when remorse for the past is mingled with despair for the future, when everything looks black and the prospect is devoid of hope. Men have been known to destroy themselves in the depression following a drinking-bout (although the true neurasthenic is seldom suicidal). Their lives could have been saved if they had had the self-control to wait until the irritated stomach and nerves had recovered their former tone. The worst thing in the world is to fly to 'a hair of the dog that bit you' as the popular phrase goes. Far better to endure as best one may the miniature Hades of 'the morning-after-the-night-before', and the depression and misery will presently pass away of their own accord.

Neurasthenics with a history of alcoholic excess are many ; but in connexion with these one question may be asked : Are not some of us inclined to confuse cause and effect ? Some of our earnest reformers point to some person morally and mentally weak, with a tendency to vice and crime, and say : 'Behold a wretched victim of the demon Alcohol !' Would it not be fair to assume that a degenerate of this type more readily takes to alcoholic excess than a person of more self-control and mental and moral balance ?

In other words, do people degenerate because they indulge immoderately or do they indulge immoderately because they are already degenerate ? It can be readily argued that both propositions are true. It is

a fact that weak-fibred people of imperfect self-control take readily to strong drink. It is equally a fact that strong drink produces degeneration of the whole body, including the brain-cells and the nerves. Transmitted alcoholic taint may render a person neurasthenic from birth (see the chapter on Heredity). When the mother is an alcoholic subject, there will be something further than the simple transmitting of a drug-craving, for during the long pre-natal period the alcohol will be in actual touch with the tissues of the unborn child. In the case of our alcoholic fathers the psychosis may or may not be passed on, or it may influence one son or daughter and not others. The writer knows of a case in which a man who was a heavy drinker begot three sons. One was an abstainer—not on moral grounds, but because he disliked the smell and the taste of alcoholic drinks. One was a moderate drinker and the last one a heavy drinker.

Another favourite way of poisoning the nerves is with nicotine, a powerful alkaloid found in the tobacco plant. This substance appears to undergo but little change in the process of smoking, and it is the cause of the maladies which attack the heavy smoker. These are many, but for the purpose of this work we will only consider those connected with the nervous system. Before doing so, we may notice in passing that General Grant died from cancer of the throat, said to be due to his excessive consumption of strong cigars. More recently, a boy died at Nottingham from smoking a large number of cigarettes. Severe gastric trouble was the cause. As regards nervous symptoms, we see in the heavy smoker a tremor and unsteadiness coupled with vertigo, neuralgic pain, and

at times a pain simulating angina pectoris, or breast-pang. Loss of memory and inability to concentrate the mind are other symptoms. One symptom is impairment of sight. 'Tobacco blindness' was a scourge of our armies during the Great War. It is, however, proved that smoking does not cause actual tissue changes, for if the smoker leaves off the habit the amblyopia disappears. Cigarette smoking is the worst kind of indulgence, affecting the eyes, the larynx, the heart and the nervous system. 'Cigarette fiends', as they are called in America, are indolent, dull-witted, and unable to concentrate. For this reason some large employers in the United States, including Mr. Henry Ford, will not engage men or boys who are addicted to the cigarette habit. At some works an applicant for employment is required to show his hands. If the tips of his fingers are yellow with the stain of nicotine he is at once rejected.

Artists and other highly-strung and excitable persons may take to bromide of potassium, and in time will become 'bromized'—when they remain in a state of lethargy and are unable to rouse themselves to go about their daily work. This substance, however, is not so deadly as some others. Cocaine and morphia are the two drugs which claim the most victims. Morphinism is a habit which not only undermines the nervous system, but affects the general health, the mind, and the moral character. The morphinist will be sallow and anxious-looking, irritable and restless. He will complain of lack of appetite and gastric disturbances simultaneously. He suffers from insomnia, and when he sleeps he is disturbed by frightful dreams. A neglect of the personal appearance is also

noticed in the patient ; he goes about unkempt, with dirty hands and nails. In extreme cases there are several kinds of hallucinations—visual and oral.

The moral sense is completely destroyed. The patient becomes a habitual liar, and will go to any lengths to obtain fresh supplies of the drug. Taxed with the habit he will strenuously deny it. It is to be noted that morphia is taken not for the pleasure it may give, but simply to still the craving for it, which is a sensation too terrible to be endured. Where opium is smoked, as in China, it is said to produce the most beautiful visions ; but the opium-smoker without his drug is a miserable-looking object. Varieties of Indian hemp are called hashish and bhang, and are indulged mostly in the East. The effects are vividly described in a recent work on the drug habit, thus :

‘ And what is it that hemp bestows upon its million devotees ? A dreamy lethargy in which the cares and worries of life find no place, but in their stead the fantasy conjures up visions more or less vague, often more rather than less extravagant, but always pleasing. At times these phantasmagoria are singularly vivid and rich in colour, and, indeed, characteristic of the delirium of hemp is the unfettered liberty of the imagination. Is this true excitation, or is it a result of the loosening of that control which normally keeps within bounds, and in due order, the imaginative faculties ? It is difficult to say, but inasmuch as that great controlling influence, the will, is in abeyance, it is more than likely that the effects are due to a loss of control, the fancy careering in a loose rein. However this may be, the sensations experienced are so

full of delight that everything is sacrificed to them—here is a mad rapture to be had for the taking of a teaspoonful of hashish.'

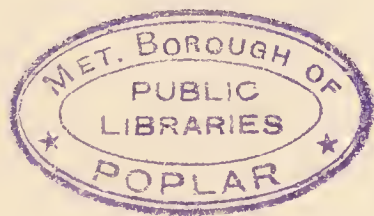
In the form of bhang, hemp causes violent maniacal outbursts, in which the victim runs amok and attacks all and sundry. All forms of hemp, if the use of them is long continued, result in enfeeblement of the mental and physical powers. In Europe and in the United States a favourite drug is cocaine. A great deal of it is used in the underworld, where it is known by various pet names, such as 'coke' and 'happy dust', and 'snow'. The general practice is to put a pinch of the drug on the back of the hand and then sniff it up the nostrils. A regular trade in cocaine is done in the side-streets of Soho, but the sellers are liable to be arrested and sent to prison. It is characteristic of the cocaine-addict that he is or she is always anxious to spread the habit and to induce others who are free from it to 'try it just once'. Of course, with people who are not strong-willed the 'just once' is repeated again and again, until the habit has obtained a firm hold on yet another wretched victim. Cocaine is taken for its stimulating effects; it not only banishes pain and discomfort but it produces a feeling of exhilaration and happiness. The addict feels light and buoyant and capable of anything.

But what a terrible price is paid for this feeling of well-being! The chronic addict suffers from unpleasant hallucinations, which may end in delusional insanity and the victim die in a lunatic asylum. Every function is impaired; the victim becomes dyspeptic, and suffers from cold sweats, numbness of the limbs

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and extremities, palpitations of the heart and various affections of the skin, such as a sensation as if insects were creeping over it. Insomnia attacks him ; and the mental faculties are impaired. Loss of memory, inability to concentrate, and lack of energy are well-known symptoms of the cocaine-addict.

There are various soporifics which are potent in forming the drug-habit. Veronal, chloral, and sulphonal are among them. They are generally first used in order to obtain sleep, but quickly obtain a hold on the victim and the craving is set up. The symptoms of the habit is loss of moral sense, mental weakness and emotional disturbance. Some physicians have recognized symptoms closely resembling those of delirium tremens in those addicted to these drugs. However, whether the neurasthenic be addicted to alcohol, cocaine or anything else of a toxic nature, it is the task of the neurologist to wean him away from the habit and restore his usual health. How this is done will be explained in another chapter.



CHAPTER IX

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

THE practice of psycho-analysis is comparatively new in the history of medical science, and even now some laymen refuse to take it seriously. This is very easy to understand, when we remember that psycho-analysis is defined as following up trains of ideas and thoughts from the conscious into the unconscious mind in such a manner that repressed complexes may be revealed and brought into full consciousness. We are beginning to realize that human consciousness is a very complicated matter. Some one has compared it to an ocean, the surface of which may be taken to represent the conscious mind, while the vast, unplumbed, unfathomed depths below is the unconscious mind. It is with the conscious mind that we go about our daily tasks and perform our social duties.

But the unconscious mind is a different thing. It is so enormous and at the same time so mysterious that it is impossible to define it or to set limits to it. Some of our leading thinkers are inclined to divide the unconscious mind into two parts. One is the sub-conscious, from which originates our animal impulses, and the super-consciousness which answers to what is sometimes called the 'higher self'. Indeed, reasoning it out, there seems much to be said for this opinion. In the present state of our knowledge we cannot say for certain if it is so, but we are quite prepared to see

further research confirming this view. But let us not be misled. This division of the mind into 'unconscious' and 'conscious', or the further subdivision of the former, may lead people to assume that we have three minds, whereas we have only one mind. The mind is one whole, but while part of it is active and conscious other parts of it may be darkened and dormant. It is by exercise of the conscious mind we carry on the processes of our normal life—we go to work, carry out our daily tasks, attend to our social duties, marry and beget children. It has been well said that we 'live consciously and exist unconsciously'. The conscious mind may cause us to do things which are hurtful to the body: e.g., we may drink too much, or commit sexual excesses. This we do deliberately and consciously. The unconscious mind on the other hand never acts to the detriment of the body, except when it is out of order. We cannot by exercise of the conscious mind, by will-power, produce any organic change in the body. We may exercise a small amount of control over the circulation of the respiration (e.g., by 'holding our breath', as it is popularly called, but that is all. The unconscious mind, when it is diseased, gives rise to a large variety of nervous and mental complaints which cause acute suffering. Sometimes the conscious mind *knows* that the unconscious one is behaving badly, and sometimes it does not know. When it does the patient suffers more acutely. Disorder of the unconscious mind may take various forms—phobias, obsessions, great depression of spirits and a tendency to harbour morbid ideas; or loss of vitality, of memory, of intellectual vigour.

In these cases the ordinary 'bottle of medicine' is most obviously useless, as are the change of scene or sea-voyage that are often ordered. The ill mind must be restored to health by another mind : hence we come to that powerful but little-known science, psycho-analysis.

In order to consider this intelligently, we must first realize the power of the mind over the body. In another chapter there has been cited the case of the butcher who slipped while hanging up a piece of meat, and was brought in suffering the greatest agony, the sharp hook having suspended him by the arm. On examination it was found that the hook had merely pierced his sleeve and the arm was entirely uninjured. Yet that man suffered intensely. Let us review a few more typical cases of this kind.

(1) A famous physician took a patient's temperature in the usual way by putting a thermometer under the tongue. The patient, an ignorant man, thought this was a novel kind of remedy and began to get better immediately.

(2) A mixture of sugar-and-water was given to a hundred patients in a hospital, and they were soon afterwards told that it was a powerful emetic, which had been given in error. Eighty out of the hundred vomited.

(3) A man was falsely led to believe that he had slept in a bed in which a man had previously died of cholera. He developed symptoms of the disease and himself died as a result of his erroneous belief.

(4) A young woman was about to undergo an operation, and the inhaler, still retaining a faint smell

of ether, was held three inches away from her face, but before the inhaler could touch her or any ether could be used, she 'went right off' and completely lost all consciousness.

These are only a few cases, but sufficiently convincing of the power of mind over matter. And it is through this power that psycho-analysis works. The principles of psycho-analysis were first given to the world in the works of the Viennese psychiatrist, Dr. Sigmund Freud. Unfortunately he expounded his theories in a way that gravely offended some readers who did not grasp the sense in which he used certain words. For instance he held that the prime factors in all psychology was sex. This led some readers to look upon him as a person who attached too much importance to sexual desire and sexual connexion. What he meant was that the sex-instinct was a manifestation of the will-to-live inasmuch as it impelled men and women to reproduce their kind, so that they need not go down into the dark tomb without leaving some portion of themselves alive and breathing in the air and the sunlight. Looked at in this light, the self-preservation instinct which urges man to seek the food which nourishes him, to build houses which afford him warmth and shelter, and to cover himself with garments to withstand the cold wind and the nipping frost—all this instinct is another form of the sex-instinct. Both these mighty and potent instincts have one aim and object in common : Self-perpetuation.

Again, Dr. Freud was seriously misunderstood when he spoke of the infant son being 'in love with' his mother, and 'jealous of' his father. People took

these phrases too literally, and were, of course, revolted by what they regarded as a horrible idea. What he really meant was to express the obvious and well-known fact that an infant child is filled with desire for his mother's care and attention, and resents anything or anybody which interferes with his receiving this care and attention undivided. Nobody, surely, would be found to deny this. Again, Freud advances in his books many cases of morbid perversion and vice, and it was assumed that he wished his readers to believe that such cases were normal. Such was far from the truth. His work as a psychiatrist necessarily brought to his consulting-room all kinds of degenerates and sexual perverts, and on their cases he founded his psychological studies. He was interested in tracing through the mental processes of the unhappy beings who came before him the germ from which sprang their aberrations.

After Sigmund Freud we have had to deal with Adler and Jung. The former held that the primary impulse was not sex-desire, but power-desire; the latter tried to bring the theories of Freud and Jung into line and to centralize all the different kinds of instinctive energy—and not merely that of sex—under one term, which was *libido*. This is generally held, by its association with, and similarity to, another word which is unusually descriptive of erotic desire, to be solely concerned with such desire. Modern psycho-analysts, however, prefer to apply it to all forms of human desire. To show how completely Freud has been misunderstood, let us quote a passage from a book written by a noted nerve-specialist of London :

‘ Put briefly, the theory of Freud and his school is that ideas of a sexual order, offensive to the better feelings of the individual, arise and are sternly repressed. Subsequently they act as a focus of irritation in sub-consciousness and give rise to nervous troubles. The man who loves and is unable to achieve the object of his desires represses his passion and then lives over a volcano as it were. Other conditions favouring it, one day an eruption will occur ; some day an explosion may wreck the very foundations of his reason. There is a good deal in this, of course, but while it may be an explanation of particular cases it can by no means be applied in general. The exponents of psycho-analysis, which professes to cure the disease by getting rid of the morbid focus of thought, have managed to attract a good deal of attention, but it is likely that the high-water mark of their popularity was reached some time since and that the tide of favour will now recede more and more rapidly. Nevertheless it leaves behind it a monument of literature, hysterical in more senses than one, which will attract the degenerate by its obscenity long after the psychologist has turned his back on it.’

To say that the Freudian theory which has attracted so much attention is mere obscenity attractive only to the degenerate, only shows how one clever man can completely misunderstand another clever man. Professor J. S. Haldane, in a new book, also attacks psycho-analysis, which he calls ‘ instruction in nastiness ’. He says that its whole structure rests on bad psychics and bad psychology. The love between man and woman, between parent and child, and between God and man

are matters which it is incapable of describing or expressing. This is drastic ; but psycho-analysis has beyond any doubt been a source of comfort, and of mental and physical health to many thousands of worried and harassed men and women. The theories of Jung, of Adler, and of Freud are at any rate worthy of respect.

How, then, does psycho-analysis work when it is used in a case of neurasthenia ? The object is to bring the hidden fears (phobias) to the surface, for the doctor has found that their power vanishes when they are consciously faced. The treatment has a positive and negative side. The latter consists in removing injurious influences from the patient's mind, and bringing up images of a hopeful and natural nature.

Many nervous diseases are due to suppressed desires, which need not be of the erotic type at all. Part of the treatment consists in bringing these repressions to the surface of the conscious mind. This is a difficult task and needs a skilled and patient psycho-therapist, for it often takes a long time to bring these repressed desires from the unconscious into the conscious mind. When this is done a large amount of repressed energy is freed, and can be made to flow along other channels. Where this result has been obtained the patient is cured.

Some psycho-analysts make use of the patient's dreams ; they get him (or her) to relate what dreams he (or she) has had, and to trace the spontaneous associations with the various incidents and persons in the dream. In many cases the association lands from some simple and trifling incident of the preceding day to a much more important incident in the past life

and thence to some trouble, either in the conscious or the unconscious mind, which is causing the neurasthenia from which the patient is suffering. Freud held that all dreams are due to some suppressed desire, but this is not always the case. A typical dream of this kind is that of the young man ardently in love, who, in his dreaming moments, is so happy as to possess the object of his desire. Then there is the student going in for an examination, who dreams that he has failed, only to wake up and find that the ordeal is yet to come. These dreams are the result of keen desires—the lover desires possession, the student desires to pass the examination, and hence the dreams.

These are very simple and obvious examples, and there are other and more complicated cases. Most dreams are based on repressed desires. From our earliest years we have been taught to exercise self-control and told that we must not seize other people's belongings. The child who cries for his little companion's toys is told that he is 'naughty' and so it goes on all through life. The ardent girl desires to be mated—which is a perfectly natural and healthy desire—but social and ethical considerations restrain her. The man engaged in an exacting business would often like to leave his work to look after itself and go to a race meeting or on to the golf links, but the necessity of attending to his work restrains the desire. In fact, all through life we have repressions, which are imposed upon us by conscience, by the opinion of organized society, and by the law of the land. Otherwise we should be worse than savages.

In dreams these repressed desires come to the surface, and it is a very well-known fact that during

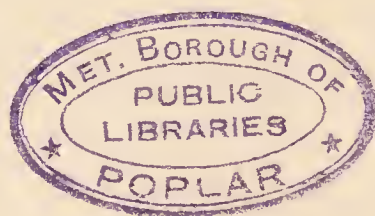
sleep we tend to become lawless and anti-social, and to do things which we should not do in our waking moments. This is due to repressed desires forcing their way to the surface. Patients, of course, cannot always see the connexion between these and their dreams until it is explained by the psycho-analyst. They are told that dreams represent the fulfilment of a wish, and they will perhaps reply that they have dreamt of the death of some one beloved, which if it really did happen would cause them the greatest grief. In nine cases out of ten this is simply the result of a tiff or quarrel over something of slight importance. The stages are :

(a) 'I wish you wouldn't interfere with the fulfilment of my desire.'

(b) 'If you were dead you would not be able to interfere with me.'

(c) 'I wish you were dead.'

These thoughts may be unexpressed and even not manifest to the consciousness, but during sleep the ideas are released. Hence the dream. But the whole subject is an extremely complicated one, and cannot be adequately discussed within the limits of one chapter. 'A dream,' says an author, 'is not a cipher to be decoded with a definite key, but rather an allegorical picture in which many figures are to be discerned.'



CHAPTER X

TREATMENT OF NEURASTHENIA

HAVING considered the causes and symptoms and effects of nervous breakdown, let us turn to the all-important subject of treatment. Let it be said at once that drugs play a very small part in this. They are a valuable help in certain ways, but other things are vital. At the outset of the treatment bromide may be useful for certain urgent symptoms, and of all tonic remedies valerian is the most reliable. The papers teem with advertisements of different tonic pills and ' -ines ', the base of each being phosphoric acid. These are at best but palliatives. They may make the patient feel better for the time, hence those illustrated testimonials in glowing terms in the newspapers, but the effect is temporary. In his treatment the physician may make use of iron, arsenic, strychnine, or quinine to take their share in attacking nervous disease, but the real cure lies in other ways. A well-known neurologist quotes a child as asking, ' How can you put medicine on a thought ? ' That child asked a question which the wisest of us could not answer. In this connexion there occur to the mind the lines of Shakespeare :

Canst thou then minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of the perilous stuff
That weighs upon the heart ?

Nervous people are predisposed to self-drugging (*vide* the chapter on Drugs and Alcohol), but this is a practice that must be sternly checked. Such drugs as sulphonal, antipyrin, trional, and phenacetin should be forbidden, even though they relieve that 'stuffy' feeling in the head that is one of the symptoms of nerve-trouble, and bring sleep to tired eyelids. They are useless in the long run, because they only relieve symptoms and do not touch the source of the trouble. Moreover, their continued use weakens the heart-action, and introduces into the blood impurities which act as a virulent poison upon the nervous system. Far more dangerous is the use of such deadly drugs as cocaine and morphine, but as this subject has already been treated in another chapter it would be superfluous to dwell upon it here.

We will consider various forms of treatment in which drugs play no part. Let us first take bathing. The idea that cold baths were of the greatest use to the neurasthenic is now exploded, except among surviving mid-Victorians. These misguided oldsters advise the sufferer from nerves that there is 'nothing like an ice-cold tub'. In one way they are right—there is nothing like it for lowering both the temperature and the vital energies. Perfectly healthy and physically robust men under middle age may take a cold tub with impunity. Where nervous exhaustion is present the temperature is lowered, and this is especially so in the early morning, when the vital forces are at their lowest ebb, and the body-heat is generally a degree and a half below the normal. It is then that the nerve-sufferer drags himself reluctantly from his bed, and summons up all his courage to face the cold plunge.

The result is that the body-heat is still further lowered, and the vital energies still further depleted. But this does not comprise all the damage that is done by the cold tub. The blood is driven from the vessels of the skin, by the shock of the icy water, into the main channels of circulation and this throws an undue strain on the heart.

On the other hand, very hot baths are too exhausting for the nervous patient, who should choose the warm bath, which has a definitely sedative effect. Let us now describe the type of bath which may be taken with advantage. The patient should see that the bathroom is comfortably warm—one of the many forms of portable stoves now on the market will help, if there is no permanent heating apparatus in the bathroom—and that the water in the bath is of approximately the same temperature, or a little lower. The bath should take about five minutes, during which friction of the skin should be maintained. After about half the time has passed, some cold water should be introduced, thus materially lowering the temperature of the bath without giving a sudden shock, the dangers of which have already been explained. When a bath of this kind has been taken, the blood vessels of the skin are really invigorated. Then a brisk rub-down with a rough towel completes the process. A feeling of warmth and fitness pervades the system, and that 'healthy glow' which the cold plunge affords the robust (but *not* the neurasthenic) is present. In warm weather, sea-bathing is extremely beneficial to the nervous, and this, with the change of air and scene, will combine to work wonders. No sea-bathing, however, should be taken when the victim of nerves

is fatigued or feels cold. Directly the bather has assumed his bathing suit he should enter the sea, no hesitation being allowed. The head should be dipped first, and then the body immersed up to the neck, moving the arms and legs, and 'splashing about' should be continuous, and after a brisk rub-down the bather will feel refreshed and invigorated. More, all chills and the accompanying sudden strain on the heart will be altogether avoided.

At times a dry-heat bath will be found useful. Several appliances are obtainable in the shops. The patient may stay in the bath for about twenty minutes, during which he will be found to perspire profusely. After the initial expense of the apparatus, baths may be had indefinitely at a cost of a few pence for methylated spirits.

The question of exercise for the neurasthenic is an important one. In some cases, it is difficult to make the patient see the importance; he shrinks from the wide fields and open spaces, and in some acute states of nervous disorder he only feels safe within an easy distance of his home. With perseverance, one may induce the patient to take walking exercise, increasing the distance as the cure advances. Aimless walking is worse than useless: to walk a mile or so because it is part of the treatment is not beneficial. The walk should have an object, even if it is a trivial one—such as noting how much progress is being made with a new building in the neighbourhood. When the patient feels better he is apt to extend his walks, but this is dangerous, for fatigue might bring on a relapse, and the careful work of weeks or months be all undone. When the patient suffers from depression a cheerful

companion should accompany him or her. In fact, a solitary walk is not at all good for a patient who is liable to brood or become introspective. Cycling is another good exercise, and almost any outdoor sport or pastime may give useful results, unless the patient is inclined to worry over results. In connexion with the foregoing, it may be noted that too much exertion is actually injurious in severe cases of nervous exhaustion. The energy and vitality are very low, and must be conserved, not drawn upon. As an eminent neurologist has neatly put it : ' The place for the over-worked man who has become neurasthenic is not the golf-links, tennis courts, the road or the river, but bed.'

The question of change of scene and change of air is one that teems with difficulties. There is a prevalent idea that travel is an excellent thing for a man who is neurasthenic, but that is a great mistake. To begin with, not everybody can afford to neglect their business or profession for six months or so, and the constant worry as to ' what is going on at home ' is enough to make the patient's last state worse than his first. Then the inevitable worries connected with trains, boats, passports, hotels and all the thousand and one troublesome little incidents which crop up when one is moving about have their own detrimental effects. It is opposed to all reason, to all common sense, to think that a man whose nerves are so debilitated that a walk of a couple of miles is an ordeal could possibly derive any benefit from a long voyage. When the patient's convalescence is nearly completed, when he is ' more his old self '—in the popular phrase—a short trip may be beneficial, but not until then. At the other extreme we have the

prescription of a stay in 'some quiet country place'. This may make for serenity and peace, but to some patients the monotony of it becomes intolerable. Change of scene is undoubtedly beneficial, but heed must be given to a patient's individual idiosyncrasy. Mountainous or hilly districts are disturbing to some patients, who cannot bear the feeling of being 'shut in'. On the other hand, very open country terrifies the sufferer from agoraphobia, who dreads the wide open spaces. Sea-air is also useful, but there is little benefit in a stay at some of those fashionable resorts where galas of all kinds of noisy, nerve-racking amusements are the order of the day and night. As to a choice of a resort, the East Coast should be avoided, as the air is much too bracing and proves too strong a stimulant for the nervous. Any of the Sussex sea-coast towns may do good, always provided that they are not too plentifully supplied with 'amusements'. Worthing is an ideal spot for the nervous, for it has a large supply of sunshine, balmy air, and surroundings that are extremely pleasant as well as being interesting. Devonshire and Dorset offer some soothing havens for the nerve-racked and run-down patients.

Patients suffering from neurasthenia may derive considerable benefit from an 'isolation cure'. The object of this is to remove them from surroundings which may have a tendency to make the state worse, or at the least to retard recovery. A patient, naturally, has less chance of getting better if he is perpetually worried about household or by business matters, and by the well-meant but maddening interference of busybodies. Even worse than these are the friends

and relatives who treat his affliction—a very real one—with derision, affirming that it is ‘ all his imagination ’ and that ‘ he could get better if he liked ’. The heartless stupidity of the latter remark needs no enlarging upon. The neurasthenic’s life is such a hell of misery and suffering that the idea of his enduring it voluntarily is too preposterous for words. When the word ‘ isolation ’ is used, it does not indicate retirement to any kind of a sanatorium or nursing-home. Some apartments in a nice cheerful district, or even a quiet private hotel—provided it really is quiet—will do quite satisfactorily. A complete change of habits and food as well as of surroundings is part of the treatment. The object being to eradicate all the troublesome recollections of home from the patient’s mind, visits from friends or relatives must be absolutely forbidden. A trained nurse should be engaged not only to look after the patient generally, but also to act as a dragon in the path of those well-meaning friends who may try to thrust their unwelcome presence upon him. This, by the by, does not mean that the patient is to be deprived of all society ; on the contrary, he must be encouraged to mix and converse with others—provided they are not likely to remind him of those home surroundings which he is trying to forget.

He must not be bored, as otherwise he may be led into introspection, and in a neurasthenic this is a great bar to complete recovery. A visit to a theatre, or a cinema, or if he is interested, to a local cricket or hockey match, will aid in chasing away ennui. How long an isolation cure lasts must depend on the idiosyncrasies of the patient. Sometimes two or three weeks are

sufficient, while in other cases six weeks are required. In order to facilitate return to normal life, the restrictions of the cure should be released little by little towards the end.

Massage is another valuable agent in the treatment of nervous cases, and it is by this time too well known to need detailed description. All the internal organs are braced and toned up by this mode of treatment, while the nervous system is stimulated. For the benefit of those who cannot afford the attendance of a skilled masseur or masseuse every day, Mr. Eustace Miles, whose views on health methods are generally sound, has evolved a system of self-massage, which he thus describes :

‘ One is usually advised to massage oneself towards the heart, starting for instance from the finger-tips and working up to the shoulder, and then starting from the feet and working up the body. There are some, however, who say that this is not a good general rule. They prefer to work away from the heart. Much depends on the condition of the individual. The great trainer, Harry Andrews, was one of the first British authorities to advocate self-massage. He suggested rubbing, slapping, pinching and pressing the skin. The rubbing could be done with the hands, or with a loofah or soft brush or towel. Sometimes the hands could have a little oil on them. This is good for the skin, particularly when the skin is at all dry. There is no necessity to expose the whole body to the air at once while one is massaging oneself. One need only to expose to the air the actual part that one is massaging. Two little-realized advantages of self-massage

are : first, that it gives general exercise to the person ; and second, that it gives not only the friction, but also the light and air bath.'

We have now considered various means of treating the neurasthenic persons : drugs, bathing, exercise, change of air, rest, travel, isolation, and massage. Electricity is another factor. It is a useful aid, but cannot be relied upon for cure entirely by itself. Other factors are essential. People have a great faith in electricity, probably because so little is known about it ; and in many cases perhaps that faith has worked towards a cure. Suggestion is potent in cases of neurasthenia, which brings us to another point. Healing in cases of nerve-trouble must be of a mental as well as a physical character. Just as suggestion of an evil nature from without can produce hysterical and neuropathic conditions, so also can those of a soothing and strengthening nature relieve those conditions. There is a well-known story of an ignorant patient in hospital, who had his temperature taken in the course of an examination, in the usual way. He told his wife afterwards that he felt very ill indeed, ' but the doctor come and put a little glass thing under me tongue, and that done me a lot o' good, that did ! ' The poor man thought that putting a thermometer under his tongue was part of the treatment, and therefore it actually made him feel better. Such is the power of suggestion. In the poorer districts patients do not believe that a bottle of medicine is going to make them better unless it is of a strong colour and tastes very nasty. In their opinion tasteless, colourless medicines are absolutely useless, and do no good.

Professor Coué had his own methods of auto-suggestion, which are too well known to need description. Whatever we may think of them, there can be no doubt that they had the effect of strengthening the will and soothing disordered nerves. In cases of neurasthenia, however, they would be useless unless used in conjunction with other curative agencies.

A most important part of the treatment of neurasthenia is the regulation of the diet. This is so important that a separate chapter has been devoted to it. The treatment of all nerve cases must include both mental and physical rest.



CONCLUSION

We have now considered carefully the causes and cure of neurasthenic conditions. We have seen how heredity has played its part, as it does in almost all human relations, and that it is inevitable that when 'the fathers have eaten sour grapes, the children's teeth shall be set on edge'.

We have seen how worry and anxiety, great griefs and sudden shocks, produce neurasthenia. That this is true, everybody with any experience of the world has seen for himself. Cases are seen every day of 'loss of memory', as it is labelled. Most of these come from domestic worry and trouble in the home. The home atmosphere becomes so intolerable that a kindly amnesia intervenes, and in this state the sufferer instinctively seeks to get as far as possible from the spot associated with so much trouble and unhappiness. It is a significant fact that sufferers from 'loss of memory' are always found many, many miles from their home.

Various diseases, including influenza, leave a sequel of neurasthenia. The abuse of tea, coffee and alcohol, and the drug habit are responsible for thousands of cases. Sexual excess shares with its opposite, sexual-repression, the stigma of being the cause of much nervous suffering.

Overwork, unless it is accompanied by worry, is not a potent cause of neurasthenia; but worry in connexion with the occupation most decidedly is.

Neurasthenia is curable by appropriate measures,

which are many and various. The proper regulation of the diet (including alcohol) is one of these. Bathing, exercise, massage, electricity, suggestion—all have their proper and appropriate place. Not the least useful is auto-suggestion or Coué-ism.

It is the author's hope that this little book may prove useful to those suffering from nerves and to their anxious friends and relatives.



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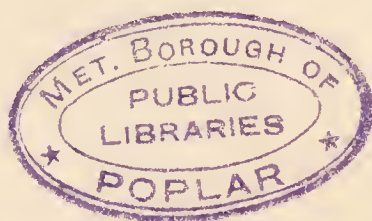
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